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ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

RUSSELL V. HAMM

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"One man's camera"

BY JEFFREY M. COOPER
BY RUSSELL V. MAYER
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April 26 through June 3



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JOLIET JUNIOR COLLEGE

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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INTERVIEWEE: MR. RUSSELL V. HAMM

INTERVIEWERS: ROBERT STERLING and ANTHONY TADEY

STERLING: This is an interview with Mr. Russell Hamm for the Joliet Junior College Oral History Project by Robert Sterling and Anthony Tadey at Mr. Hamm's home at 15126 Meadow Lane, Dalton, Illinois on May 26, 1973 at 10:30 in the morning.

STERLING: We usually like to begin with some biographical information like when and where you were born.

HAMM: Do you want me to start?

STERLING: Yes. When you were born and where.

HAMM: Well, I was born on December 19, 1887, in what was known as back of the yards of Chicago at that time. It was one of the older neighborhoods that sprung up after the Chicago fire, the big Chicago fire. It was surrounded, of course, with the stock yards and brick yards. I come from a family of three boys. One of them has passed away, the youngest; the other one is retired now and living in Clearwater, Florida. I went to school; I was a kindergarten dropout.

STERLING: You're kidding!

HAMM: Not quite. I made it to fifth grade. As a matter of fact, I am going to speak there on Tuesday at their Decoration Day. It is the first time I've been back at the school in 67 years. I'm going back. I started work at a very early age. I started as a newsboy and hustled newspapers for a few years. Then I went to work in one of the old early

movie studios in Chicago up on Western and Irving Park Boulevard. I forget the name of it now. I also worked in the S&A Studios as a kid with a rubber apron and rubber boots developing film. Then when World War I came along, I enlisted and went overseas and served three years. I served on three fronts: I served up in Piccardy; I served up in Meuse Argonne; then I served at Verdun. I was wounded, received five wounds. But I came back out of the hospital and went on up into Germany with the army of occupation and served up there for a while. I came home and went back to my camera, turned in my machine gun for a camera. I've been working with my camera ever since. I traveled around the world with my camera on assignments, paid assignments. My assignments have run the gamut from Alpha to Zymorgy, especially Zymorgy during the untouchable era and the period of the Roaring Twenties. I worked twenty-six years for the Chicago Daily News. Then I had an offer from the Tribune; they were wanting me to come over. I have been gifted, thank God, with a creative mind. The average cameraman, of course, becomes very adept with cameras; but there are too many of them that are not creative. You give them the camera and tell them what to do and they will do a good job, but they just can't seem to think for themselves and get out to do features. So I have been gifted with a creative mind that can come up with features. I did a lot for the Daily News, so the Tribune wanted me and they hired me. I put in sixteen years with them. When I got near the retirement age, I finally moved to Florida. A friend of mine encouraged me to come down there. We went down there and I was eleven years on the Fort Lauderdale News. I was chief photographer. I enjoyed it, but my wife didn't adapt herself to it. She just is not a joiner and did not particularly care to join up with the women's activities. She is a homemaker. She was lone-

some for the granddaughters. I was at home, of course, being in the newspaper business. I covered many assignments down there that made the front page. As a matter of fact, I have been on every island on the Carribean, every single little piece of land that sticks out of the Carribean; I've been on every one of them. At the time it didn't impress me too much. I know one time that I was really thrilled, I was on the island where Columbus landed. They've got some three different markers up there. He was supposed to land here, there, who knows. I have flown over all that area. I flew over Cuba. I made what was the first photographs during the time when there were rumors that the Russians were building bombsites. They hadn't had any proof positive as of yet. I went over Cuba on an English plane. Cameras were prohibited strictly. You were not allowed to make any pictures. But I had mine with me and I took a seat on the right side at the rear. When we got over near the shores, I got ready to go to work. We were up about eight thousand feet, pretty high; and I had a fifty-millimeter lens and the windows were kind of dirty. The average window on those planes was not too clean. As we flew I photographed the first shoreline to try and show the land formation. Then, as we got over, and having served in the army and knowing something about gun implacements, I recognized activity in a couple of spots. I didn't know quite what it was. I recognized it as something to do with the military, so I photographed it and made as many pictures and negatives as I could. Then I flew back the next night. Of course, I couldn't do anything at night, but I processed my film. Although it wasn't too clear, under magnification you could bring it out. So I spoke to the managing editor and they became excited. We took it to the F.B.I. office in Miami and then, in turn, we took it to Congressman Paul Roger's office. I have a letter from that congressman.

Well, anyhow, the negatives went into Washington and they magnified and blew them up and found out for sure that this was what they were doing. These were the placements for bombs. So there was quite a lot of excitement. That was the first time that there was actual proof. Kennedy started the ball rolling. He started sending down everything possible down to Florida and Key West. He had the Army, Navy and Coast Guard alerted. The intercoastal highway was just one ship after another. The trains were bumper to bumper going down with troops. Key West was practically ready to sink in the ocean, there was so much there. They were ready to go right after them.

TADEY: That was the Cuban missile crisis you're referring to then?

HAMM: Yes. I had no idea that I had actually stirred all this up. Nobody today I guess, even knows about it. In a sense, you could tell them about it. It actually was the first.

TADEY: Were you there for the Bay of Pigs, too?

HAMM: Yes. Weeks after. Then I flew over. Well, I have been over the Caribbean a number of times. When they brought the prisoners back, I photographed all the prisoners from the Bay of Pigs. I also photographed the shiploads of drugs and shiploads of food and clothes out of Port Everglades, Florida. Shipload after shipload went out. Cuba never had it so good. We sent everything but the kitchen sink to them. As a matter of fact, I had a run-in with Bobby Kennedy who was in charge there. I was always doubtful about the whole setup because he was trying to stop us from publicizing it. I found out later that he had done some sort of hook-up with them to keep it under covers. Then I flew over when the people

started to flee out of Cuba. They came out in everything that would float, from bathtubs to washboards and little old boats. Our navy was trying to ward off the Cuban gun boats that were gunning them down; they were trying to rescue them. I made a number of trips over and photographed them. Of course, I photographed them when they landed and when they were in Homestead, the airbase there. They brought a lot of them in there. So I had quite a few front-page, hot news stories out of Florida.

STERLING: Going back to your early childhood in Chicago for a minute, is there anything about Chicago that your parents or grandparents might have told you?

HAMM: Yes. . .

STERLING: You were born just after the depression of 1893, weren't you?

HAMM: Yes. My grandfather lived on the next street from the O'Leary's where the so-called cow kicked over the lantern. My grandparents, my mother's people, were Irish. They lived on the next street and there was an Irish settlement in there. They would tell a story about my grandfather. They had, of course, outside plumbing. There was no indoor plumbing. My grandfather came over from Ireland and worked in the brickyard; he made brick. He worked twelve hours a day; and everytime he made an extra dollar, he brought another relative over. They were supposed to have come over about the time of the potato famine. When the fire started, grandfather was down in the outdoor plumbing, in the outhouse. He always took his Sears-Roebuck Catalog and sat there and read and smoked his pipe. My grandmother could smell the odor of something burning, and she wondered what he was smoking that was so strong. [Laughter] Anyhow, after the

fire. . . The fire went north of them so they didn't lose their home, but they moved out to what was Brighton Park on Archer Avenue, out about 38th or 39th Street, along there. Then the other relatives moved out. They all centered around that area. There was a big brickyard, Carey's Brick Yard, which was out around 39th Street. There are government warehouses in there now, but my grandfather went to work out there in the brickyard, making brick. Then there was a brickyard in Blue Island. There were a number of them. I came along after they had established themselves out there. I am the second oldest in the big clan. They always kid about the Mulcaheys. I'm the second oldest. I have a girl cousin who is the oldest and I forget how many children followed up. Quite a gathering.

/Laughter/

TADY: Where did the fire actually start?

HAMM: The fire started on DeKovin Street.

TADY: Is that the near north side?

HAMM: No, that's Canal and north of Twelfth Street on Canal about four or five blocks north of Twelfth Street, Roosevelt Road.

TADY: It started actually south of Madison Street?

HAMM: Oh yes, quite a distance south of Madison Street.

TADY: And it burned north?

HAMM: It went north. The wind was blowing north. It went northeast; I've got a Chicago book here and can show it to you. It went north and finally stopped up around Lincoln Park, north of Lincoln Park. It took

everything in its path. Of course, there were so many wooden homes and wooden buildings. The equipment for fighting fires was poor and there was no water or anything. It moved so fast, and it had such a high, strong wind that it just traveled like wild fire, is what happened.

TADEY: What was the expanse of the city? How much of it actually burned?

HAMM: Well, most of the city actually. . . if you want. . . here is a book on Chicago that you can really get the feel of it.

TADEY: This is your grandfather?

HAMM: Grandfather.

TADEY: They were around then when the Chicago fire started?

HAMM: Oh yes. They lived, like I say, on the next street, south of where it started.

TADEY: Did they know the O'Learys?

HAMM: Yes, they were friends and neighbors.

TADEY: Did they go along with that story that the cow kicked over the lantern?

HAMM: I never heard if that was the true story, as far as they were concerned. They never mentioned it. None of the family ever brought that up whether that was the true story.

TADEY: Was there any bitter feelings toward the O'Learys?

HAMM: No, they were always good neighbors. Really, I think that the. . .

See, people were careless. There were no fire ordinances and those things. As I said, my grandfather smoked an old corncob pipe, and he had that thing going all the time. They would knock out that old corncob pipe. They were careless about the way they did it. As far as the cow story, it is a pretty good story; it's pretty colorful. But I don't know about that. It could have been that the lantern could have been set down carelessly and tipped over itself, or the cow's tail swishing around could have hit it.

TADEY: We see on your photographs here the Chicago Water Tower.

HAMM: Yes.

TADEY: I heard that it has something to do with the fire.

HAMM: Yes, the fire hit that and couldn't destroy it. . . There are some pictures in there on it, and you can fan through there and get some idea there. The tower withstood the fire. Some of the churches on the north side stayed up. Of course, it burned out the interiors and everything.

TADEY: Was Holy Name Cathedral built then?

HAMM: Yes, Holy Name Cathedral was burnt. The big Episcopal Church was burnt up. It burnt out practically all of the city. It didn't go west. Of course, there wasn't too much west in those days. Most of the city was north along the lake; and, of course, the ships, the lumber ships, used to come in and dock all along the river. The big lumberyards were along there. As a matter of fact, when I was a kid, I used to work there on Saturdays. They used to unload the lumber ships by hand. They had big husky fellows that used to pick up the planks and carry them off of the ship and load

them on the docks by hand. Now, of course, they have derricks that lift a whole truckload at one time.

STERLING: How has the waterfront changed from the time when you were growing up until today?

HAMM: Well, it has changed considerably because the waterfront was. . . the Illinois Central. They put in pilings and the railroad ran along on pilings on the waterfront. Grant Park, what is now Grant Park, was all marshy. It wasn't what you might say habitable like it is now. It wasn't beaches and all that sort of thing.

TADEY: I heard the lake used to run right up to Michigan Avenue?

HAMM: Yes.

TADEY: Was Grant Park filled in?

HAMM: Grant Park was filled in. They sucked the sand up with big sand suckers and for years there they just kept adding to it in there and kept filling it in. They were even filling it in up until 1921 or 1925 or even after that. Where the Field Museum is now, that was all filled in. That was just nothing but marsh, and railroads used to run along there. At times when the lake was rough, it would wash right up on what was Michigan Avenue. Of course, it wasn't much of a street then.

TADEY: I noticed in your photographs there you have a picture of a flood.

HAMM: Oh, that was down on the Ohio River.

TADEY: That wasn't Chicago then?

HAMM: No, that was the Ohio River. I forget the year--1938, somewhere around there. I covered the flood following all the way from Pittsburgh. I forget the source of it, but I followed it all the way down to Cairo and Cape Girardeau. I think those are some of the fire pictures there, aren't they?

TADEY: What was the year, could you say offhand, when Grant Park was completed?

HAMM: Well, it was after the 20's before it was really completed.

TADEY: It's really rather new then?

HAMM: Yes, as a matter of fact, the first airplane pictures I ever made was in 1912. They had an air show in what was then Grant Park. It wasn't very big. The star of the show, the fellow that inspired me in to making pictures and things, the first pilot that I remember was a man by the name of Lincoln Beachey. And he was the big star; and, of course, they flew in those pusher type planes out in front, you know, sitting out there with a wheel. I can remember him making a touchdown landing in front of the Art Institute and just touch and go. Of course, that was quite a thrill. And then, too, another flight after that. . . well, the first flight was from Chicago to Joliet along the Chicago & Alton Railroad. The pilot followed the railroad to Joliet. I can't think of the year, but I distinctly remember that they every so often at intervals, they had white sheets that they put along the railroad tracks for him to follow, so he'd know he was on the right track. I can remember the people and the kids were all standing on the edge of the sheets to get a close-up view /laughter/ when he went over.

TADEY: Those were the old barn-storming days. /Laughter/ Was Lindberg well known then?

HAMM: No, Lindbergh came along later. I've flown with Lindbergh and knew him when he was barn-storming. . . when he was flying the mail. He was also free lancing. As a matter of fact, he's had a standing feud with the newspaper people and I can understand why. A lot of the newspapermen don't know why. It was during one of the downstate tornadoes that tore up Murphysboro, I think it was, and the Tribune hired him to fly down and meet the photographer and pick up his glass plates. They hired him to fly down and pick up the plates and fly back with them. Well, he flew down; and he just couldn't get a place to land, so he slid into a farmer's cornfield; and came into the main street of the town and was walking along; he was to meet a photographer named Eddie Johnson for the Tribune. He was coming along and he'd see a photographer and he'd ask, "Are you Eddie Johnson?" Well, at that time there was a lot of competition between the different newspapers, and the Examiner had a sharp fellow working for them named Bill Burkhart. Lindbergh approached Burkhart and said, "Are you Eddie Johnson of the Tribune?" And Burkhart said, "What do you want him for?" He says, "Well, I'm supposed to take your plates back to the Tribune." So Burkhart, who had a quick brain, said, "Well, you wait here and I'll go get them." So he went over to get them out of his bag. We always carried bags with us and we always carried extra packages of plates. So he got a package of plates that had been unopened and gave it to him and said, "Now rush back with it." So Lindbergh rushed back, got over to his plane, took off in the cornfield, got into the Tribune and went up to the editorial department and turned it over to them. And, of course, they looked right away and they

knew that they were not exposed. They said, "Who gave you these?" He described the fellow and they said no. So they said sit out in the hall for a minute. He went and waited for his money, because, it turned out, he had borrowed the plane and hadn't made the proper deal with the owner. So he was getting nervous about it. He sat cooling his heels in the hall until they tried to trace it down and find out. In the meantime they didn't pay him. So Lindbergh went away with a pretty bitter feeling toward the Tribune and toward newspaper photographers; and he never did live that down. He really always felt guilty. He felt disturbed about it. I've flown with him. The last time when he came back after his flight, he was given the Harmon trophy and all the publicity. He went back to Lambert Field; he had flown for the people there. As a matter of fact, I get ahead of myself. . . I photographed him one time when he. . . the boss called me up about two or three o'clock in the morning and said, "Get out near Summit or Argo. There's a goofy pilot out there that can't find the airport and he bailed out." [laughter] "He cracked up out there and he'll meet you on the corner." Well, I got out there and, of course, there wasn't much there then and I met him standing on the corner; and he had on golf knickers and long stockings. We went back to what was left of the airplane and piled some of it up. I had him standing on top of it posing. At that time he asked if I would see that he got a print and I said I would. I don't know whether I ever gave it to him or not. I flew with him when he came back and went to work for his old boss. He owed him so much, having bailed him out, I think, three times. He cracked up three ships. So he went back to flying mail for him. I think I've got some cuts here on it in some of the pictures that were used. I flew back with Shirley Short who was the Daily News pilot, who had won the Harmon trophy the year before

Lindbergh won it.

TADEY: What was the Harmon trophy?

HAMM: Well, that's the Oscar of aviation. It's the highest honor in aviation. I doubt if it still exists. Short got it in the year before and Lindbergh got it the following year for his flight. The News was getting ready to do a round-the-world-flight and the Belanca people were building a double motor deal to make the flight. It had a double motor in the front and a motor in the back. They built it down in Wilmington, Delaware, and Short was going to fly it around the world. Later, then, they had double gas tanks and all that sort of thing; but they made the gas tanks in triangular form, and they had them up and down which was a bad deal because the pressure on the gas in that type of tank. . . well, I'll mention what happened. I was on it. Bob Casey, Robert J. Casey, who was very famous and has since passed away, was a very famous writer for the paper. He wrote all the features, and he wrote a column called "Vest Pocket Anthology." Bob was quite a character in the newspaper profession, considered to be outstanding. Bob and I were on it the day before circling the city to get all the problems that developed. There was a whip in the axle, or the driveshaft; because of the long driveshaft, there was a whip on the rear end that was burning out the bearings and the gas tanks were beginning to bounce and Bob and I were lying on top of these things. Anyhow, we made this flight; and then the next day they worked on it, and then the following day they were to take off. They got ready to take off and they got up, I forget how high. (We were going to go; then we cancelled out.) And it crashed and the whole works went up in smoke. They never got further than Maywood. That's as far as they got. Where was I? We were

talking about Lindbergh. Well, I had flights with Amelia Erhart and with Jimmy Doolittle.

TADEY: What was Amelia Erhart like? Was she the first Women's Liberationist?

HAMM: No, Amelia Erhart was kind of a mannish type of a woman. She was at home with a group of men, more so than women. She was a very nice, very nice woman and no powder-puff-type of a woman. She used to drink with the men. I've photographed Amelia. Of course, a lot of my negatives belonged to the newspaper and I couldn't use them. The News had them, and they since have gone into the Chicago Historical Society. I photographed Amelia when she was getting ready before she left. I photographed her with Judge Landis's son. What was his name? Ken Landis. And I photographed her with him, and her husband. Of course, the greatest woman aviator of all time is Mrs. . . . Oh, I photographed her in Florida a number of times. I don't remember what her name is. It'll come to me. Most of these flights were with these aviators that were moonlighting. In those days we didn't have wire photo, and we didn't have regular airmail schedules, so we'd hire them and they would fly. . . we would cover assignments, and they would fly them back.

TADEY: Who was Erhart's husband: Wasn't it Putnam?

HAMM: Putnam, yes. He was a publisher of books and things.

TADEY: Could you detect femininity in her , or was she completely the tomboy type?

HAMM: She had. . . she was not strictly a tomboy type.

TADEY: Putnam must have seen something in her then.

HAMM: Yes, she was good company, very good company. [She was] a real gal. She just mixed well. He was the intellectual type--blue suit, white shirt, black tie. And Amelia would come along with an old leather jacket on. She resembled Lindbergh so much that sometimes you had to look twice.

TADEY: There are rumors that when she died over in the Pacific that she was on a spying mission for the United States government. Did you ever hear any rumors about that?

HAMM: Oh, I heard a lot of them, but I don't put any faith in that. I think that they were lost somewhere out over the ocean, because the ships and things that they had. . .the equipment for communications was bad; and then, too, the ground communications in those places was not good. You couldn't communicate like you do now, you know. No, I think that they were lost out over the ocean. She may have had some connection with the government; I couldn't be sure about it. There wasn't too much of that sort of thing going on in those days.

TADEY: She never indicated anything then?

HAMM: No, she always. . .she was all thrilled about this whole flight. She was very mechanically minded. She knew the workings of the plane and was a good pilot. You'd see her set down the ship, set it down on a three point landing. To ride in the plane with her and be up in the cockpit, she was always good company. It's too bad that we lost her. She was a gift to this country. I'm trying to think of that name and it did come back--Jacqueline Coughrin is the other woman pilot. And she, of course,

was married to a very wealthy man. She does all her own flying and flies jets and everything else. I photographed her coming and going, and she'd always excuse herself and say before we'd get out to make any pictures, "Wait til I get gussied up." She'd go into the little compartment she had and take off her coveralls, and then she'd come out in a dress.

/Laughter/

TADEY: Before we get off aviation, where were the airports in the Chicago area?

HAMM: Well, we had Ashburn Field. It was one of the first biggest ones around here. It was out on 79th Street, I think it is, out beyond Harlem. Then we had the airmail field. They handled the airmail where Lindbergh flew in and out. This was over where Hines hospital is now. As a matter of fact, a couple of buildings are still standing. It says, "U. S. Airmail" on them.

TADEY: Has it all been built in now? Is it residential?

HAMM: Oh yes, it's all solid. Then there was another small field out on Roosevelt Road. It's quite a ways west. I flew in and out of there many times. It was out near those cemeteries out there.

TADEY: Mount Carmel?

HAMM: Yes, it's out along in there. Well, no, Mount Carmel's north of there. This is a big Jewish cemetery. Jewish and German cemeteries are out there.

TADEY: What year did Midway and O'Hare come along?

HAMM: Well, Midway came along years after, I'm trying to think, somewhere in the '20's, and then, of course, during the depression and the WPA. I had a funny experience during the WPA. They had thousands of men out there laying out cinderpaths for the runways. I had a creative mind and I was always looking for features. As I drove along there one day, I saw these thousands of men standing there. It just looked like they were. . . didn't seem to be anybody working. They were leaning on their shovels. "There's a good picture." It was good, because, you know, you're always trying to protect your government and all that. So I photographed them and we ran it in the paper with the credit line. The next day I got a call from a cousin of mine who was very much disturbed. He was telling me off because he was in full charge of all this and I didn't know it. /Laughter/ He caught what was known as "holy hell" /laughter/. These fellows couldn't lean on their shovels anymore. But they built most of the cinder runways.

TADEY: That was during the depression?

HAMM: That was during the depression; and Midway, of course, became the biggest airport all across the country. It grew like Topsy. It just grew overnight. It got to be one of the busiest airports. Then, later, of course, they built the small airport down at the lakefront. That didn't amount to much.

TADEY: Miegs Field?

HAMM: Yes. Then O'Hare came along years later, and the military built that and then it went on from there. In the pictures over there I don't know if you remember seeing some farm scenes, old homes. One scene was of

an old man standing there with a big pile of pumpkins, a farmer. Well, that was right in the middle of what is now a jet runway. They bought his property and he had to move. Well, there were five brothers, German farmers, and they had to move out because they were putting the runway in there. Then there's an old church picture there where they were moving a church and a cemetery. They moved all the graves and everything. Well, that was also in the middle of a jet runway, and I photographed the whole thing before it changed. They just moved everything when they put in O'Hare.

STERLING: In the period just before you went into the army, World War I, say from your earliest memories up to World War I, how would you characterize Chicago politics? We call that period the Progressive Period.

HAMM: Well, as you ask these questions, things come back to my mind-- scenes flash back in my encyclopedia mind. In the early days politics in Chicago went around newspapers, because we didn't have TV, and we didn't have pretty-boy announcers and we didn't have those fellows who analyze and dissect all these things. The papers used to set up ways of communicating with the thousands of people who came into the Loop. They used to come into the Loop by the thousands on election night, different places now. In Grant Park the Hearst papers used to set up big searchlights, giant searchlights, that's before radio. And our paper would set up projection machines in office buildings and then put great big sheets on the elevated platforms and we would project the results. And that's the way the people got their results. I had a funny experience covering that one night. There's a story about it in here. I sat up on top of a canvas-topped wagon with slats to photograph the crowd looking up at the sheet. The

wagon was underneath the "L". I called down to the driver to back up a little because I wanted to get as much of the crowd at an angle. They were projecting it from the Daily News office. So he backed the wagon up. I didn't notice it, but he backed it up right under the platform which was right over my head and I had four ounces of powder on double pans, which is enough to blow your head off. I hooked the thing up and I pulled it and it hit the platform. It came down and hit me on the head and the concussion was so bad that it wrapped the pan around my neck like a bow tie. It threw me right through the canvas and the slats and I landed down in the wagon with my camera and all. Luckily, I wasn't hurt, and I wasn't even frightened, because it all happened so fast I didn't know what happened. Later the fellows at the paper were looking out the window and when the smoke cleared away they said, "What happened to Russ? Where did he go?"

/laughter/ As far as the politics are concerned, politics was pretty much the same as it is today. Of course, we had Bill Thompson who was a no-goodnik. /laughter/

TADDEY: When was he mayor?

HAMM: Well, he was mayor back in the '20's, and then we had different ones that followed; but politics was much as it is today. You know, it makes me laugh when I think of all this hullabaloo on Watergate and all of that. Back in those days they had the same thing, but they had stool pigeons that would carry what they wanted to know from the other parties. They were paid, you know. Just as these fellows are paid to break in and get the information. They had stool pigeons who were working in both parties, and they would carry the news back and forth, no different. I mean they would steal and carry it and, they would listen in. I was thinking back

to some of the early days, as far as bugging is concerned. Did you ever see the book and movie written by Ben Hecht called the Front Page? Well, it's been revived. I worked, of course, with all the characters in that. As a matter of fact, I might have been part of it. In those days newspapermen used to work the criminal court. The regular men were there, and they used to bug the State's Attorney's office and all the different offices. They used these doctors' stethoscopes. They had glass doors in some of the places; and they would have those and put them up to the door and listen while the grand jury was in session, and they'd bug it that way. And then they'd use a drinking glass and put a little rosin on the thing, and they'd put it against the door and listen through the drinking glass and they'd bug it that way. So bugging is not new. I mean, newspapers did it; and that's how they got their scoops and got a jump ahead, and, of course, they all did it. One of the characters in the Front Page who was very famous for it was the character Hildy Johnson who was considered to be the star of the Front Page. I worked with Ben Hecht, and I worked with Charlie MacArthur who was the husband of the famous woman actor, Helen Hayes. As a matter of fact, she's going to be at our old veteran's party the twenty-sixth of June.

TADDEY: Is that the same Charlie MacArthur. . .

HAMM: Charles MacArthur. He is Helen Hayes' husband. Politics haven't changed a bit. There was the same routine that they have now for getting money. In order to build a sidewalk out to the street, if you had any kind of a business and you wanted to put in any kind of cement slab out to the street, you paid the alderman. He had a price. You didn't pay him directly; he always had his man. And all the police captains had a man. I can

remember Maxwell Street, when it was in full bloom. You had to pay a daily fee to set up your stand. It graduated from a newspaper spreadout on Maxwell Street, with all the junk they would put on it, up to an orange crate, and then up to a pushcart with wheels. Of course, the fire department ordinance was that they had to have everything moveable; they had to have wheels. Then on up to the big stands, they paid a daily fee. The Maxwell Street police station generally had an officer who worked for the captain and went around collecting the fees. He would have the money sticking out of his fingers and these tickets that he would sell. Of course, the trick then was to go up to these people, and depending on the type of stand they had, sell them their daily license. It was understood you paid five dollars or what ever it was; you didn't ask for change. That's the way they would get their money. Of course, there was no receipts. That was the type of thing that went on for years and years. They made money that way. As a matter of fact, I tried to photograph him and he ducked me about a dozen times. Maxwell Street on Sunday morning starting at daylight was like a beehive of people. Thousands of people showed up, and the majority of people came down to find one thing, more or less. There were specialists, people who were looking for certain things. I did stories on a number of them. One very wealthy woman, who lived over on Grand Boulevard, specialized. She came there and parked her car off on a side street, and she would buy iron objects like fire place equipment. She would pick up these old rusty things, and she would buy them cheap. Many of the people who sold these things knew her, and they saved them all for her, and she would pay a better price for them. She would take all these things and put them in her basement at home. She had a process where she would, through acid baths, clean these metal things and make them look

practically new again. This was her hobby. I don't know whether she sold them later or not, but she had thousands of different things that these people would sell to her. There would be others, and they would buy watches, and others would buy horseshoes and just anything; and Maxwell Street would have it. Then, of course, they had regular stores that sold suits, shoes, and hats; and you would see a big sale on shoes and you would wonder how come they can sell them so cheap. What they did was to buy job lots from factories that would be making them. They had two shoes tied together (brand new), and one shoe would be off a half a size or something. /Laughter/ People would try on one and get home and find out that the other one wouldn't fit. They had all these different things and they would sell them. Most of the dealers were Jewish. Many of them were the old shyster-type who would bargain and trade, and haggle with you over the price. There were a lot of those types in business there. Further down the street, in the bigger stores, there were a different class of people. They did a lot of business on paying so much down. You sign a contract and they sell you a suit of clothes. Then you pay two dollars down and so much a week. Maxwell Street was one of the most interesting streets. There was all kinds of odors, hot dogs, watermelon, and then a couple stands down a fellow would be treating corns and callouses. People would be sitting there getting their corns trimmed. /Laughter/ Then next to it would be a corned beef sandwich place. One fellow used to sell canary birds, and he had hundreds of cages of canary birds. I think it is the male bird that won't sing; I think it is the female that sings. I may be wrong. Right in the middle of this thing, hidden away, he had a real warbler worth a couple of hundred dollars, because it was probably a champion. These people would be walking by these

birds, and they had their ear cocked, and trying to pick out which bird was singing. They would walk and stand around, and he was sharp and would say that it is that one there. They would go over and listen and finally they would buy it. They would get home, and the bird would never let a peep out of him. /Laughter/ And that was the way they used to get rid of these birds. They'd sell them cheap with a little wooden cage and everything. They had all kinds of second-hand tools; then, too, a lot of articles were stolen.

TADDEY: Could they drive cars on the street?

HAMM: No, you couldn't drive on the street. The city law said that they had to have wheels on every stand in case of fire, so that the fire department could come in and move them. I saw many stands that used to have a couple of wheels set up alongside of the stand so that it looked like they had wheels on it.

TADDEY: Did they have fish?

HAMM: Yes, they sold carp and cleaned the fish right there for you, and it was really a colorful place. If you were a newcomer and were not used to that sort of thing, you might urp your groceries before you went very far with all the things that went on. It was not very pleasant to your smell buds. /Laughter/ The politicians skimmed money off Maxwell Street and the like.

TADDEY: Just like today, but nobody would investigate it?

HAMM: No, nobody would bother to investigate it. They knew if they were going to build up Brookfield Zoo, they would find out where the main gate was going to be, and then they could get that property, which was generally

vacant property with some of it behind in taxes. Oh, the politicians haven't changed. This is not new, none of it is new.

TADEY: Before the first war, how many different parties did they have? Like in Chicago, if I was running for mayor, how many different parties would there be?

HAMM: Oh, you had two that amounted to anything. Republican and Democratic party. But there was. . . Eugene Debs; he came up with a party. Then there was another one, the Progressive Party came along. Teddy Roosevelt came along with his Bull Moose Party. But two were outstanding, and they were able to get the backing. Of course, patronage was the big thing, to hand out jobs.

TADEY: Weren't there any issues in the campaign then? What would the issues in 1910 be about?

HAMM: [Laughter] Offhand I can't recall any outstanding. . . there were promises, promises, promises that were never fulfilled. They would promise the world with a fence around it, but the day after election. . . I grew up, as a matter of fact, I remember Daley when he was an errand boy, just starting out in Chicago around Fifty-Fifth and Halsted Street. I was just a kid, and I worked for Patrick J. Carr who was an alderman. Then he got to be sheriff, then he got to be county treasurer, then he was scheduled to be mayor long ahead of Daley. There was two aldermen. That was the fifth ward in those days. David E. Shannahan was Republican, and he had power in the stockyards, the old stockyards around Halsted Street. I'm trying to think. . . I worked for Pat Carr as an errand boy. Then I used to drive in his horse and buggy.

TADEY: What were these politicians mostly, Irish?

HAMM: Yes, most of them were Irish.

TADEY: Was that the biggest ethnic group in Chicago?

HAMM: Yes, the biggest ethnic group. Although Polish was the outstanding ethnic group, but they didn't. . . the Poles were not politically-minded. They didn't force the issue--like the Irish did. The Irish got all the policemen, and firemen, and they got the jobs on the El trains. I know Patrick Carr used to have a dozen men around the office every morning when I would go over and they were all looking for jobs on the El line or street car lines. They got to be the conductors and the motor-men. The El cars used to have a man between each two cars. Then they got City Hall jobs, and Sanitary District jobs. Patronage was the big thing.

TADEY: That would be the way the guy would win the election?

HAMM: See what he would do, when he hired you, gets you a job, then your whole family falls in line. Your whole family depends on him, and they were big families in those days. So they just all automatically fall in line and voted that way.

TADEY: How did the ethnic groups go according to parties? Who would be the Democrats, the Irish?

HAMM: Yes, the Irish. Of course, they were in full command. The Germans, we had a big German population. We had a big Polish population. And, of course, the Jewish population, they fell in line with their leaders, Jewish leaders. They managed to take care of most of the judge jobs. There were quite a few Jewish judges.

TADEY: Were the Republicans the upper class, though? Who would go with

the Republicans?

HAMM: The upper class of the Irish went with the Republicans. What we used to call the South Shore, the elite, the Lace Curtain Irish, they called them. /Laughter/ And I won't mention what they called the Irish around the stockyards. /Laughter/ Think for yourself. But then, too, the Irish took over a lot of jobs in the stockyards. Everything from hustling cattle up to the killing floors, right on down the line. Then the brickyards were practically all Irish. Of course, in those days they started to build homes out of brick, out of common brick to get away from the wood. They were busy there. But, politics hasn't changed at all. It is the same routine. They've dressed it up a little and that sort of thing.

TADEY: I heard bombs had a lot to do with elections, election day bombings and all that?

HAMM: Well, early, let's say starting with the twenties, I can go before that, of course, but, no, there wasn't too much of that sort of thing. There wasn't any of that real violence, you know, extreme violence. That came later. It came after World War I. No, in our day, there was violence you might say, but it was saloon fights and that type of thing. They would get into a discussion, get into an argument in a saloon, and they had a lot of saloons.

TADEY: That's where politics were discussed?

HAMM: Yes, they used to thrash it out there; then they would wind up in a fight and a fellow would get tossed out in the street. They didn't use anything to try and take his life away, but they would batter him up

quite a bit. No, there wasn't that violence even in the Roaring Twenties in the early days of the bootleggers. There wasn't too much of that going on. It all ~~came~~ later. All this type of thing that is going on to-day, taking people for a ride and all that. That all came later.

TADEY: What type of stock did the politician come from? They say that a saloonkeeper would be the perfect man for a politician?

HAMM: Well, I'm sure most of them had investments in saloons through their families. See, their uncle or brother-in-law or nephew had a saloon, and they were always able to run a family saloon. In each neighborhood there would be any number of them. Of course, they were always the meeting places. They could keep the boys in line. The two big ones in Chicago that handled all our derelicts was Bath House John's and Hinky Dink's saloons on Clark Street. Hinky Dink and Bath House John's had these big, great big nickel beers, the biggest in town. All the wanderers and derelicts would hang around these saloons. And, of course, the day before election, they would line them up and give them a half-dozen addresses to go and vote for these people. The election board in those days, I think Judge Jerecke was in charge, didn't operate anything like this fellow that is in there now. They would go vote in these different election polling places. They would vote, go on out, then go down to another one. Sometimes those fellows would vote a half dozen times. Then they would come back and get their money.

TADEY: Did you have to be registered in those days to vote?

HAMM: Yes, but they would be given the names. And then, of course, the clerks in the polling places, the Democratic and Republican clerks, I don't think were too honest. They had a part in this. These names would

be given out. Then when the regular name would come in, there would be a discussion to find out who you were, and they found that you had been in and had already voted and, of course, there was always problems. There was no voting machines. It was all paper ballots. Then toward closing time, they could look down the list. If a certain percentage hadn't come in, why there was always those ballots, and they could always be filled in and stuffed in the box. The clerks worked out schemes and everything whereby they got their bread buttered because they got their jobs and everything. So elections have been crooked, and they haven't changed too much, even with the voting machines. [Laughter]

STERLING: What about national politics, the assassination of McKinley was probably a little before your time. Then comes Teddy Roosevelt. Do you remember him being President?

HAMM: Yes.

STERLING: To your knowledge did he or Taft or Wilson ever come to the Chicago area?

HAMM: Yes, I photographed Taft. Taft came here. I saw him in 1912. He came here on a visit. As far as national politics is concerned, we had no source of news about those people like they get now. We knew nothing about them. The papers didn't get too much information. They had Washington correspondents who traveled with them, but they didn't delve into the things that they do now. I met Taft and then followed President Wilson, Woodrow Wilson. I have a scroll that was awarded to me from World War I for my services, signed by Woodrow Wilson. I treasure it very highly. Wilson was considered to be (he was a Democrat) a very upright

man. Then, of course, the first big upset came with Harding in the twenties; then after Harding. . .

STERLING: Coolidge?

HAMM: Coolidge. And Coolidge, he was quite a man. /Laughter/ I traveled with him a lot and my younger brother traveled with him, photographing him when he was campaigning. Coolidge was quite a man.

STERLING: Getting back to Wilson for a minute, do you recall his attempt to get the Versailles Treaty ratified and so forth? Was that a real big issue?

HAMM: Yes, he was able to handle all of that and I have some slides on that. . . Of course, I was over in France along about that time; he could handle things. Of course, they gave F.D.R. credit for being the brains of a lot of things, but I think that Wilson was really the man. He was a professor and a very well-educated man, a very talented man.

STERLING: At Harding's death there were rumors that his wife had poisoned him and that sort of thing.

HAMM: Yes, he was involved in many things. He was involved with women. It was rumored that he had illegitimate children and that sort of thing. He was not a very popular man.

TADEY: What do you really think killed him? Was it ptomaine poisoning or what?

HAMM: It is one of those things. . .

TADEY: How did the newspapers report it?

HAMM: Well, I don't recall all of the details on it. I rode his funeral train from somewhere out west all the way into Washington, went through Chicago and all and made many photographs of the train as it passed through the cities with the people. No, I just don't recall.

TADEY: It wasn't a big issue at the time?

HAMM: The fact is that he was not popular.

STERLING: You were back from the army during the Chicago riots of 1919?

HAMM: No.

STERLING: You weren't back then?

HAMM: No, I came back in '20.

STERLING: I was wondering whether you knew about the riots of 1919. It started on the beach and. . .

HAMM: Yes, it developed around 35th and State, the center of the colored; and they had the National Guard in there. I heard about it, of course. I got back in '20 and it was all over then. We never had too many problems.

STERLING: Was the Klan strong in the '20's around here?

HAMM: Well, they were strong, but it wasn't open in the sense like they show it in the movies. Of course, your movies and your Hollywood productions, they distort everything, you know. They make a mountain out of a molehill. And the way they had things. . . We never had any real trouble with the colored people, the colored were down at 35th and State all along State Street from 47th to 12th Street. We didn't have the colored

population that we have now. Most of them were employed. The Pullman Company employed thousands of them and the railroads employed them. Many of the department stores had them in different labor class. . . the public utility companies, too. But we didn't have any big breakout types of riots. The Police Department, of course, in those days operated differently than they do today. They may have used police brutality in a sense, but they didn't have to warn a man before they arrested him like they do now and all that sort of thing. They just clobbered him and took him away. I watched a certain change come over Chicago. I could see changes taking place and the migration. . . During my time we had these different ethnic groups in different parts of the city. Out south and in that area there was Irish, French and Polish. I could see them beginning to move out and colored would start to come in. Then up north, the Swedes and the Scandinavian groups, they were starting from right around Lincoln Park, where Old Town is. They would be moving out and you could see them. . . see the change taking place. More colored were coming in all the time from the south.

TADEY They were down south then?

HAMM: Yes, they were just coming in droves. Of course, there wasn't places for them to live, because we didn't have them. These old apartment buildings that these people would leave, the owners didn't spend money fixing them up and so the colored would move in. One problem we had at the time, we had a fire, there would be any number of people that would lose their lives because they were packed in like sardines in the apartments. Nobody would know who was who and who their neighbor was and how many people lived in them. There was no way the Fire Department could tell.

TADEY: The unemployment was building up then?

HAMM: Of course, the stockyards were strictly. . . The packing plants were all Polish; they employed all Polish. The railroads employed almost all Italians on the track crews, and the repair crews in the railroads, they would get them as immigrants as soon as they came over to this country. Then the Negroes started to come, and the real trouble started when they started the labor organizations, the C.I.O. When they started to work on them to join the C.I.O., that's when the real problem started. It was just like a hornet's nest. They stirred them up until we had big problems. They joined these labor unions and finally the stockyards. . . You could count on one hand the number of Polish people working there.

STERLING: What were some of the biggest stories you covered in the '20's?

HAMM: In the '20's? Well, just about everything that took place.

/Laughter/ Well, in crime, of course, I covered. . . let's see, there is a picture I cut out of the paper the other day that the National Air Races were held in 1930 at Glenview. That is an old picture that I made of Colonel Lindbergh and his wife.

TADEY: You were there for the Colosimo shooting?

HAMM: Yes.

TADEY: Could you tell us about Jim Colosimo?

HAMM: Well, he was a character. He was also one of these saloonkeepers who controlled the baseball. I was in on the first atomic explosion. When they were making the bomb at Stagg Field, in the building next to it, the University of Chicago Laboratory, they were working on the atoms and

had a big explosion. I was in the building next door in the publicity office on another story when it happened. I got over there as quick as I could; and, of course, I got there before anybody else got around. I remember them saying, "Be careful of the hard water." I had no idea of what they were talking about. I was wandering around there taking pictures. That was the first experiment, it was an explosion and it blew up the place. Let's see, I keep getting ahead of myself there. You asked about Colosimo? He was down on Wabash Avenue. He had the first big saloon and nightclub-type of place, and he brought Al Capone here as a bouncer. Then he had houses of prostitution on Wabash Avenue and Twenty-Second Street. Let's see, here is some of the 1922-type of thing.

TADEY: Now Colosimo, couldn't he control an election?

HAMM: Yes. He had a big hand in the First Ward. He controlled a good portion of the. . .well, he had the First Ward and the downtown vote and all that sort of thing.

TADEY: Where would the First Ward extend from?

HAMM: I don't remember what the boundary lines were, but I know that the heart of it was, I would say, from Twenty-Second Street north to up past Lincoln Park and then west to Ashland Avenue. All that area would be his. . .Hinky Dink and Bath House John were all in his area. Of course, his place was very famous for gambling. They had gambling and all that sort of thing.

TADEY: Are you familiar ith the famous restaurant that he had over there?

HAMM: He had the, let's see, what was it? . . .

TADEY: I suppose they called it Colosimo's then.

HAMM: Colosimo's had his place on Wabash Avenue. That place is down now.

TADEY: Well, they say all the politicians and famous actors and singers used to go there.

HAMM: . . . used to go there, and it was kind of "where the elite meet to eat" thing. It was a hangout. And people would go there to be seen.

TADEY: I heard Caruso sang there.

HAMM: Yes, it is true that he was there. Practically everybody that was in show business and theater. Athletes and ballplayers would go there, and the early players of football would go there to be seen.

TADEY: This area he controlled, was it called the Levee?

HAMM: Yes, it was the red-light district. It was the Levee.

TADEY: I heard that it used to be the place to go, too, for night life around Twenty-Second and Wabash.

HAMM: In his day. . . Of course, the street is practically empty now; but Armour Avenue which is now. . . Dearborn Street, and then Armour Avenue, those were all the red-light districts. Every building, every house, were houses of prostitution on both sides of the street. It was like Mardi Gras time at night with pushcarts selling hot dogs. In those days they used gaslights and that sort of thing. They didn't have electricity, but things would be alive. Men of all kinds would come there . . . to these houses of prostitution. Some of the famous places, they got to be very famous somehow, and some of the people who ran them became very

famous.

TADEY: Is this the area that Carl Sandburg wrote about in his poem about Chicago?

HAMM: He may have wrote about it. I worked with Carl Sandburg on the Daily News. As a matter of fact, he owed me money. /Laughter/

STERLING: Is that right!

HAMM: He never paid me. He used to moonlight, and he had a guitar and used to go to these noonday lunches in the LaSalle Hotel and different hotels, and he would tell stories and play a few tunes. He would pick up ten dollars at noontime doing these moonlight jobs while he was on his lunch hour, while he was on the News. He was busy practically every day of the week. Let me see, who else was there? Somebody else used to do that, too. He had to have some pictures made for his advertising, his publicity. So I made them and gave him prints and everything; and he promised to pay me, but never got around to paying me.

TADEY: Colosimo, getting back to him. Did you photograph his shooting or what?

HAMM: No, I got there afterwards. I got there after it was over.

TADEY: Why did they want him eliminated?

HAMM: It was a gang thing. He was involved with his own people. He had a woman. I'm trying to remember her name. She was very. . .

TADEY: The actress?

HAMM: She was married, and she was involved in it in a way. Big Jim was involved with a number of women. He started to step on the toes of some of the climbers, you know, that were coming up, and they didn't like it. So I guess they wanted to get him out of the way. It was a pretty bad district in those days. It came alive at night. In the daytime, it was just like any other area.

TADEY: They had white slave trading?

HAMM: Yes, all that sort of thing went on. They brought the women in. Of course, the police records. . . As a matter of fact, long before my time they used to have an annual ball in the Old Coliseum in Chicago, which is at Wabash and 16th Street. The building is still there. It's a replica of the Civil War prison during the war between the states. In those days, that was the only building in Chicago where they could hold these affairs. They used to hold this annual ball at the Coliseum, and all of these people that were in charge, in power, the politicians and everything, they all went there and that's where they got their donations. Nowadays different men give big fees to get an ambassadorship. In those days, the prostitutes and the streetwalkers and everybody had to make a donation. They had to buy so many tickets and go to this big ball and that's where they gathered their money.

TADEY: So after they got rid of Colosimo, who was the first mayor to come in in the '20's? Was that Thompson?

HAMM: Big Bill Thompson.

TADEY: And the gangsters put him in office?

HAMM: Well, he came from wealthy parents and they owned practically every part of Madison Street from State Street west, his people did. They were very, very wealthy and, of course, he could buy and sell just about any he wanted to. He was brought in as Big Bill, the Builder; that was his title . . . And he was quite an exhibitionist and always had a lot of gags and things to color himself up. One that he used during one of his campaigns when he ran against Doctor Robinson, who had been the head of the Health Department, John Dill Robertson. . . But Fred Lundeen was the guiding hand in the Republican Party, and he was pretty much the power. He was pretty much a tool for the Daily News, which was a Republican paper at that time. Victor Lawson, who was the publisher for whom I worked, was the power. It was between the Daily News and the Tribune, who were Republicans. We also had The Journal, which was the Democratic paper, and the Evening Post, which was in between. And then, of course, we had the Hearst papers which were pretty much the lower-class-type. They were Democratic, also the Chicago American and the Herald Examiner. Well, when Bill Thompson came in, like I say, he could probably buy his way into anywhere. They were building the Municipal Pier about that time out in the lake, so he had a lot of deals on to glamorize the city and put it up on top. This John Dill Robertson, who was the Health Commissioner, ran against him. So Big Bill Thompson got an idea, and he called John Dill Robertson a rat. So he got himself two big rat cages and he had two big rats, live rats, in each one. One was Doc Robertson and the other was Fred Lundeen. He went around with these two big rat cages preaching, electioneering with the two big rat cages. Then he got the idea that he could get a lot of publicity by threatening the king of England. He threatened to go over and punch the king of England in the nose, and he used that as a gimmick. He had a lot of that type of Barnum and Bailey type of publicity that put

him over. Everybody got the feeling that Big Bill the Builder was the man; he would give you the shirt off his back. As a matter of fact, he was a Shriner, and he got a lot of publicity on the crippled Children's Hospital; he was supposed to have been a big donator to it. I don't know how true this is, but I heard through the grapevine that he had never donated anything to the Children's Hospital. I was at the two bank buildings when they opened his vault, his box. I never saw so much money stuffed in a safe deposit boxes in my life. It was in there like bails of money. I don't know how true, but the rumors were that he, Big Bill Thompson, never gave a dime to the Children's Memorial Hospital.

TADEY: As for graft, he didn't need the money then.

HAMM: No!

TADEY: Was he taking in any money?

HAMM: Nobody knows, but he sure died and left a lot of it. I don't know whatever became of it. Never did hear the total amount.

TADEY: He had some kind of campaign slogan, too, when they asked him about probition or about alcohol. He had something that, "If the people want to drink, let them drink."

HAMM: Oh yes, he was as wild a character as you would ever want to run into. In my early days, you asked about the different types of assignments. As I say, those sheets tell some of them; and, of course, the Dempsey-Tunney long-count fight in '27.

TADEY: You were there at ringside?

HAMM: Yes, I covered that. Dempsey is a good friend of mine still, still he is. Of course, the story on that is that Jack was always tickled pink that it happened. But at the time he was not very happy about it, because if it had been a normal ten-count, it would have been forgotten about. As Jack says, "Of course, I didn't know it at the time and I was upset about it. But it has lasted through the years and people will always talk about it." Here are some of the photographers that covered the Roaring Twenties. They're all dead, but two of us. (shows a picture). Here's an old letter, speaking of that time. Look at the date on that. That's when Leonard Saks was Dempsey's manager, then. He trained out at Lincoln Fields, which is now Balmoral Park.

TADEY: When was the Dempsey-Tunney fight held?

HAMM: In 1927.

TADEY: I'm not too familiar with it. You said there's something about the ten-count.

HAMM: Well, the thing that happened was that he knocked Tunney out and Tunney was the World's Champion. Then Dempsey made a mistake and didn't go to a neutral corner. He went to Tunney's corner. Dave Barry, the referee, motioned for him to go to the neutral corner before he started the count, and the timekeeper was tolling off the counts. I think he was up to four and Dempsey was still standing over Tunney. Finally, when he got him to go, the timekeeper tolled off four, five, six. Then the referee tolled off one, two, three, four and up to ten, and that's where the fourteen count came in. Here's a story I wrote on the traditional last meal. In the early '20's newspapermen got together and there was a Greek restaurant in the alley in back of the county jail. We got the idea

where we could get some free food. So we conned the Greek restaurant owner into preparing a last meal for the condemned men the day before they were to be hung. He was told his name would appear in the paper and he would become famous. I helped tell it and I wrote the story about how he used to send up a big meal and, of course, all the newspapermen would go through and we'd keep adding to it. /Laughter/ We added steaks and all that, and just for a gag we added artichokes. That Greek wasn't very smart, but he figured, "How can a condemned man have a taste for artichokes?" /Laughter/ So that stopped it. /Laughter/

TADEY: So they were hanging the prisoners?

HAMM: They used to hang them, yes.

TADEY: When did the electric chair come in?

HAMM: Well, that electric chair came in years later. I photographed a number of hanging. That is, not the actual hangings. We never photographed the actual hangings. But I photographed different ones that were led to the gallows from the death cell. They used to say it was the last mile, but actually it was only from here over to there walking. One fellow I photographed had to be carried in a chair. He put himself through self-hypnosis. He put himself into a coma whereby he had to be carried in a chair. He was out like an unconscious person. This fellow Carl Wanderer had killed a couple of automobile salesmen. They still kept the gallows after the law was changed and the electric chair was put in. They kept the gallows and took it down and kept it out at the new county jail, because one prisoner that was sentenced to die by hanging had escaped and was never caught--Tommy O'Connor, Terrible Tommy

O'Connor. And they still supposed to have kept the gallows so that when his time came. . .

TADEY: They didn't send anybody down to Stateville to be executed. Everything was done locally?

HAMM: Yes, it was done locally. They never allowed photographs to be made of the actual electrocutions, but different ones were able to get in and do it. One fellow, Joe Mignon, he's still working down in Miami, hollowed out the heel in his shoe and when the little Minox cameras came out, he put his in the heel of his shoe and covered it over and got in and used it.

TADEY: How many executions would they have in a year? Nobody gets executed now, but how about then, were they frequent?

HAMM: I don't remember. In that picture of all those photographers there, do you folks remember reading about the Ruth Snyder case, the only woman to be electrocuted? This fellow here, he's in that picture, he had his camera strapped on his leg and then he had a long cable that released up in his pocket. He sat in a spot where he could pull up his pantleg and he photographed that electrocution which was the first time a woman was ever electrocuted. His name was Tom Howard. Tom has since passed away, but he made the first electrocution picture.

TADEY: Generally speaking, though, if somebody got the death sentence in those days, they'd probably be followed out then. There weren't any appeals or delays and delays?

HAMM: There might be in some of them, but the majority of them were. . .

when they were sentenced, they were sentenced. There wasn't so much of this. . . The lawyers weren't the type that nowadays know how to get around it. As a rule, they were proven guilty. There wasn't too many ways of beating the law in those days. It's funny how these thoughts keep coming to my mind. During the prohibition when these gangsters were killing each other off, Dean O'Banion, who had the florist shop across the street from Holy Name Cathedral, was killed, was shot by hoodlums who he thought were friends coming in to order flowers. He went up to shake hands with them and, of course, they gunned him down. At his funeral, which turned out to be one of the biggest in Chicago, and somewhere I got pictures here of all the gangs that showed up. They were not allowed to bring funerals through the Loop; it was against the law, still is, I think. But his funeral went through the Loop and they crossed State and Madison Street and there were five hundred cars of mourners and there were fifty cars with floral pieces, said to be a hundred thousand dollars worth of flowers. It took about two hours for this funeral to go through the Loop. Cardinal Mundelein was Cardinal at that time and he refused to bring him into the Holy Name Cathedral and refused to have him buried on consecrated ground. His casket was made in Philadelphia. It cost ten thousand dollars, and they brought it in a special express car on the railroad. He was buried in a ten thousand dollar casket!

TADEY: Dean O'Banion, he used to hobknob with the politicians, too.

HAMM: Yes, he was a kind of a go-between.

TADEY: He had the north side of town?

HAMM: He had the flower shop across from Holy Name Cathedral.

TADEY: He was in charge of bootlegging up there, though, too?

HAMM: Well, yes. He also was in the bootlegging business.

TADEY: Wasn't he a choir boy at Holy Name Cathedral at one time?

HAMM: Yes, he was.

TADEY: Let's see, I'm trying to think of the place on the north side of town where he was a singing waiter before. . . It's sort of a famous dive up there.

HAMM: There were so many. Of course, Roger Touhy was involved with all those characters. There was quite a few of them who came along and developed. There got to be quite a few of them. That's when they started to quarrel among themselves.

TADEY: One thing I want to bring up, there are politicians on the Chicago scene today that have the same names of certain gangsters during the twenties. There is an alderman Aiello and there was a gang of the Aiello brothers. Is there any relation to those guys?

HAMM: Yes, they were related. That is, many of them were related. What was the Italian name for it? Compari; I don't know exactly what it is, but there was relations mixed in there. At one time we had five Genna brothers that were slain. In the early days these gangsters didn't get to know who we were, because we were able to keep in the clear. I used to be assigned a lot of times to Taylor and Halsted Street undertakers over there---Salernos Undertaking Parlor. I had a couple of funny stories; this city desk would tell me to go over and browse around and see what I could hear and see what I could find out. Well, I would go into the

undertaking parlor and kind of just walk around the background, hang around and listen to the conversations. At that time I had made a picture of one of the Genna brothers. We used to make our pictures at the county morgue while the bodies were on slabs. We used to tip the body up. They would have a sheet on it, and they would pull the sheet down and we would photograph the head. Then we had an artist on the paper, fellow named Art Hendricks, a little fellow, who was the original John Q. Public. He is the fellow that drew that character. He used to have a little cigar in his mouth. And Art was frustrated; he never go out to any of these affairs, but he always had to work in the office, doing the art work. It just used to eat his heart out. Here he was holed up in the office doing all these things, and we would bring in the pictures of a gangster with his eyes closed, laid on a slab. He would have to paint in the eyes. He would paint in eyes, and then he would paint in a white shirt, and a blue tie, and a black coat. For one Genna brother, he painted a hard hat, what they call skimmer, and he put a cigar in his mouth, and we ran it in the paper. So I was sent to this undertaking parlor, and I overheard the conversations. They were talking about the picture that was in the newspaper. "Did you see the picture in the paper?" I heard one guy say, "Well, that couldn't be him." "Why not?" "Well, did you see a cigar in his mouth? He never smoked cigars." "Did you see the hat he had on? He never wore a hat like that." Then they were talking. [Laughter] But we had to go up there. I covered Capone's funeral, and had a very frightening thing happen. I got a car sticker through one of my friends, Italian fellow who lived in the area; and I got a sticker for my car window for the funeral. I fell in line way at the tail end of the procession and followed it out to Mount Olivet at 111th and about Kedzie Avenue there. And as the funeral procession went through the main gate and wound

around. I dropped back and took a side road all around to get as close as I could get to where the hearse would stop. It was very cold weather, winter, and we always kept the camera down around the heater. I had my camera down around my feet and had it all loaded and everything as the hearse stopped and the people began to crowd around. The pallbearers were all famous gangsters, and they opened the doors and took the casket out; and all got a hold and maneuvered around, and then they started to walk to the grave. I waited until I could get the composition that I wanted. I opened the window in my car and I reached down and got my camera and I leaned over to make the picture I was wanting. The horn started to blow and I thought, "Oh my God!" I looked around and there was nobody behind me. Everybody was looking over at me and I suddenly discovered I had my elbow on my own horn. I got out of there in a hurry, /Laughter/ because they had threatened. They had said, "We don't want any cameras. If any show up, we will break your legs," which was a form of punishment that they used.

TADEY: Did you ever meet Capone while he was alive?

HAMM: Yes, as a matter of fact, one night at the bike races. . . I photographed him many times. I don't know whether that picture of him up in the corner there is mine or not. . . Anyhow, I made the picture of him at the bike races. It was about two o'clock in the morning. He called me over. I was with a buddy of mine, who was a bike rider who I served in the army with. He motioned to come over, so I went over the track and climbed over and up. He said, "I want to talk to you." So I thought, "Oh, now what did I do?" He said, "You made a picture of me that I liked. It is the best picture I ever had made." So he peeled off his money and

he reached out and took my hand. He gave me twenty dollars and he said, "You didn't show the scar." He said, "Don't get the scar in it when you make it." He didn't like that scar on his face. And he didn't like to be called "scar face." So he gave me twenty dollars. Oh, he said, "Buy yourself a new hat," is what he told me.

TADY: There are a lot of stories. Did he do a lot of charitable work during his time?

HAMM: He did some, yes.

TADY: Was that just for publicity?

HAMM: No. The money was rolling in so fast. I forget the year he made over a million. . . million and a half in one year. The money was coming in so fast that he didn't know where to spend it. Just rolling in. He was that type, Italian type, that he did things for people. If they got to him, why he would give them money or anything. Christmas time he sent out baskets. There was a restaurant down there. There still is one down at Twenty-Second in the old motel. He used to have baskets made up. Of course, a lot of these different outfits that used to give out Christmas baskets would fill it up with a big box of corn flakes or something and make it look like something big. But he actually put in big turkeys, chickens, geese, and stuff. He would fill them up, and this restaurant would handle it. These people would come down there and get in line. I photographed the line, their getting the baskets. He wouldn't get in the pictures, though.

STERLING: Did you or any other reporters try and do an expose' or something like that on Capone or any of the others and get personally

threatened?

HAMM: Well, I was threatened a number of times by different underlings, but I was never threatened by anybody up in his group. Some of these underlings would threaten you and threaten to go after you. Of course, in those days we used to use flash powder, magnesium powder. A couple of times when I was making pictures they came after me. They didn't know this, and I was glad they didn't; but when we'd load up the gun and fire it and make the picture, it was over, we were through. So the only thing I could do. . . They would start to come after me and go to grab me and I'd hold the flashgun out and threaten to blow their head off. Well, I had no powder in it, and they would shy away from it and swear at me and call me names and say they were going to get me. I would say, "OK, any-time, boy. I'll just blow your head off." /Laughter/

TADEY: How did the papers treat the gangsters? Did they try to expose them?

HAMM: They did in some cases, but not too often. They just seemed to take all that with a grain of salt, the political wheeling and dealing and the gangsters. There was hardly a day went by that we didn't have to start right out. I'd get a call before daylight. A body was found slumped over the wheel of a car or a body was found in the canal with cement shoes and all that stuff.

TADEY: Was that maybe because it was good copy?

HAMM: They used to. . . As a matter of fact, the series that was on television called The Untouchables---Jerry Thorpe is the guy who wrote it and Jerry is still writing out in Hollywood. Jerry was on the rewrite desk on

on the News, and he used to pick up all the stuff from the reporters that were out on the thing; and then he would save a copy for himself. In later years he wrote "The Untouchables." Walter Winchell, another guy, was up in a big building in New York and didn't get out on these things, but he used to narrate them. I used to be assigned with Elliot Ness and different ones that were working on the thing. We had to get right in there and get pictures. Then we'd have to go a lot of times when they would knock over the still, and we used to travel around. I was with them many times. They traveled around to these big garages, and they'd pull in these great big buildings where they had a garage and as soon as they'd pull in, the first thing they would do is get out and look at the ceiling. If they had a still up above, the sugar and molasses would seep through the concrete. As thick as it was, it would leave marks on the ceiling. You could see big splotches up there. So right away they would knock it off, and sure enough, they'd have a still up there. That was the way they found a lot of them--just by the marks on the ceiling.

TADDEY: The newspapers liked to sensationalize all this stuff, don't you think? I heard about how they used to show some pretty bloody pictures on the front page, stuff they wouldn't show today.

HAMM: Yes, our paper wouldn't show too many of them. My picture of the St. Valentine Day Massacre there never got in the News. We wouldn't use it. I made the first one. I was there first and made the first one. I made other pictures for other papers whose fellows couldn't get in. They were stuck in the crowd, and I made a plate for them. As a matter of fact, other papers come into the newspaper office and used a picture full page, my picture, that our paper wouldn't use.

STERLING: How did you happen to be there first?

HAMM: I was standing by the city desk and a call came in from the circulation department and the manager of the circulation department said, "I just got a call from a driver who is over on Clark Street, and he said there is something going on over there. He saw police coming out with shotguns getting in a car and pulling away in a big hurry. There were shots heard." So they said, "Russ, take a look." I always took the quickest way over; and when I got there, there were some people standing out in front. Everybody was talking and everybody was asking everybody else what happened and all that. We always barged in and never asked any questions, just barged in. I barged in and there was an office there, a little moving company office and nobody in there. I could hear a dog barking in the back. Just then a policeman came in from the Park District and he wanted to know what happened. I said, "Well, I don't know. I just got here." So I was ready and had the flashgun loaded with powder, and I said to him, "There's a dog back there; now be careful, he sounds vicious." So I said, "I'll kick the door open and let go and then jump back. You close the door so the dog can't get out." I went through all of this and when the door was kicked open, I saw the bodies laying around and then I made my first picture. Of course, it all happened so fast it was just like a flood of people coming in. It filled up the place in no time.

TADEY: Well, the policemen they saw leaving were actually the killers?

HAMM: They were the killers. They dressed partially in police uniforms.

TADEY: Who were they identified as?

HAMM: Oh, I had all their names. I forgot them now. They were all part

of the Capone outfit. McGurn was there. I had them all here but. . . it was never proved who did the killing. But I photographed all these fellows at one time or another. I think the last one I photographed was McGurn who was shot and killed in a bowling alley. He was lying alongside a big brass cuspidor where he was killed.

TADEY: Was that over on Milwaukee Avenue?

HAMM: Yes.

TADEY: Didn't he have a note in his hand that was something about St. Valentine's Day?

HAMM: It might have been.

TADEY: I see.

HAMM: One of the others committed suicide out on. . . Oh, alongside of a cemetery fence. It was Frank Nitti.

TADEY: Nitti?

HAMM: Yes, Nitti, Frank Nitti. Yes, I covered that. All of those fellows that were in on that, they all died a violent death one way or another. Oh, I was going to write a book and I'm working on it. When the spirit moves me, I start to write. I don't like to go back into reference and that sort of thing. It's sort of boring. Of course, at my age, seventy-five, I'm beginning to find that dates and things are beginning to get a little hazy, you know. One interesting thing I recall. . . it was a beautiful day, sunshine, the Cub's park was crowded, a full house. I think they were playing Pittsburgh with standing room only. People were

hanging from the rafters, and I was assigned to the sport's department to cover baseball games. In the first couple of innings, the first inning practically, I would have to make something, some action picture, and leave my camera and hustle downstairs and run out to the front where I had a special cab that I would rent. This fellow would meet me and grab my holders; and then he would go back to the office as fast as he could and we would make the final editions. Generally, as a rule, you could never get any good action in the first inning, generally some fellow running across first base. You very seldom got a second-base slide or third base, or a run. So I was working; I did my pictures, and I rushed downstairs out to the front. I left my coat hang on my chair with all my things and rushed out to the front. And as I came out (they removed the turnstyle after the game started and they had it open) and rushed through to the front, I was in my shirt and trousers, no coat. All of a sudden, there was a gun in my back. I thought it must be a gun; they pushed it right in my back and it hurt me and they said, "Put your hands up." They grabbed ahold of me, my hands. . . And there was two or three and then they come from everywhere. There was all kinds of excitement, and I was being pushed around. I didn't know what was going on. My cab driver started to come over to meet me. . . At that time, I was wearing gold-rimmed glasses, which fit into the picture because Dillinger had been wearing gold-rimmed glasses. To make things sort of short, I found out that I was suspected to be Dillinger and that he was in the ballpark that day. The FBI had a line on him, and they figured out that he had evidently found out that they were after him and tried to get out. I was supposed to be him. They thought for sure I was him trying to get away. Well, while this was going on, hundreds of people were hanging over the railings, and

they were making all kinds of noise and everything and there was a lot of confusion. Traffic stopped on the street and it was exciting, but to me it was all going around in a circle. I had nothing on me at the time to identify myself; I left my press badge and everything in my coat pocket. Finally, my cab driver helped identify me, and we finally got it straightened out. Then these fellows disappeared back into the ballpark. Well, I heard later that, yes, Dillinger was at the game and he had Anna Sage with him and Polly Hammel, which was his girlfriend. He evidently got out when the confusion all began. He got away; he got out of the ballpark and disappeared. This all went on while the game was on, and actually I was in a state of confusion all that afternoon trying to figure it out. I don't know if I got any good action shots or not. /Laughter/

TADEY: What was that? The summer they shot him?

HAMM: It was just a short time before. It was just a very short time before. Of course, he was living right close to the ballpark. He was living on Halsted Street, just a few doors north of Lincoln Avenue, which is not far from the ballpark. You could almost walk there. They had a line on him, but they couldn't seem to catch up with him.

TADEY: Do you remember the night they shot him in Chicago?

HAMM: Yes.

TADEY: Can you give us a little history of that? What was that night like?

HAMM: What?

TADEY: What was that night like? Was it hot?

HAMM: It was, yes. It was on a Sunday night. I had been assigned to it

and had been working on the case. When it happened, I was in my car--I forget where I was going--and I didn't have a line on the fact that he was going to be at the theater and that they were waiting for them. I faintly remember, I got the word just about the time it happened, and I was just a short way away. I hustled on over there and got there when the action was taking place. His body was lying in the alley, and I was trying to park my car. By the time I got parked and got my camera, they had moved the body from the alley into a patrol wagon. They just put him in; they had him on the floor, and I got a picture. His feet were sticking out of the end of the patrol wagon, and he had on white summer shoes. It was warm weather, a heck of a hot day, and I photographed that. Then I photographed several other things, most of the other things didn't fit into the case too much. The East Chicago, Indiana Police Department was there with the FBI. The Chicago Police was not in on it. They didn't know about it. The FBI kept it a secret, and of course, the Chicago Police was quite upset because they weren't cut in on the deal. While all this was going on, I photographed the front of the building, and somebody whispered to me that he lived just around the corner. So I hustled around the corner to the place they told me. It was a flat building, and I walked up the steps to the second floor. Down the hall, the first room on my left, was a little dingy room, and all I could see at the moment was a small bed and a little stand with a magazine lying on it--I think it was a detective story--and a picture of a woman on this little stand. Down the hall, it was a long hall, there were people talking and I couldn't quite understand what was going on, but I picked up the picture and slid it into my coat to take it and try to identify it. From down the hall, these men came to me and said, "Out! Out! Get out! Get out!" They saw my camera. I wanted to take a picture of this bedroom, if that is where he lived. I

wasn't sure. But, they gave me the runaround; it was the FBI, and they ran me out. There was nothing I could do there then. I photographed the front of the building, so we used diagrams, you know, "X" marks the spot; that was his room. I couldn't make a picture of the inside of his room, but anyhow I took the picture back to the office and copied it. I couldn't identify the lady; but of course, it turns out that the next day, I identified her. She was . . . they had her in the police station, and it was the same woman I had a picture of. So I got an identification and it was Anna Sage, the lady in red. We still didn't know her name, but we had the jump on that; we were ahead of the others on that. But it was a mixed up affair; it's awfully hard to get ID's when all that is going on. You really have to scramble to find out what the score is.

TADEY: What were all the sightseers doing there then?

HAMM: Yes, they come in, you know, usually by the thousands. And they get right in on it and you never know who's who. You know the FBI might be dressed as a street sweeper, you don't know who's who. So sightseers come in and you can't tell one from another.

TADEY: What paper were you working for at that time?

HAMM: Well, the Trib.

TADEY: We were down at the library in Chicago reading the old newspaper file on the accounts of that. They were talking about a lot of people that were going by, dipping their handkerchiefs in the blood.

HAMM: Well, I think it was exaggerated a lot. Tell you what people did do though, newspapermen did it. I started it. When we got over to the morgue,

they took him to the county morgue; and, of course, they stripped him of his clothes over there and had all of his belongings and everything registered and finally put them in a big paper sack. I photographed him laid out on the table, and I photographed his fingers, because he had dipped his fingers in acid and the acid had formed thick callouses. And of course, I found out at the time that you cannot destroy your fingerprints. You can't destroy them. The only thing you can do is just cut them off, because dipping them in acid just causes callouses, and they still show through when they take the prints. I photographed his fingers and I photographed his feet. They had him on the slab; and they had a big butcher's tag wrapped around his right toe, and it said, "John Dillinger" and then the date that his body was turned over to the coroner. I photographed his bare feet sticking up, and it made one of those wierdo type of things. When I got through, I just unconsciously took it; it was a little wire with the tag, and I took it off and took it with me. Nobody saw me do it. I took it back to the office, and when I processed the print and layed it on the desk, I had the tag and threw it down and said, "There." In about two seconds everybody in the place rushed over to see the pictures and to see the tag; and immediately different ones wanted one. "Get me one! Get another one! Go back and get a couple!" Well, I tried to talk them out of it. I went back over to the morgue and by the time I got back, the morguekeeper was pulling his hair out. I don't know how many tags he had put on this toe, but everybody was stealing the tags. They were taking the tags off. Well, I never got one myself, but years later I wished I had kept it for myself.

TADEY: How long after the guy was in there did they let in spectators and the people off the streets?

HAMM: Well, they put him in a room that had glass walls. They used this room for ID's where they bring people to identify people and don't have to come into the actual room. They could go by like a glass window, a plate-glass window. They pushed the cart up there, pulled the sheet down, and picked the cart up, so they could look at it. I am trying to remember who the coroner was at that time. He was quite a publicity hound. We wanted to make pictures with the people looking at him; and, of course, he wanted to get into the picture. He was the head of the thing there, so I made a shot--I don't say "shot" because I don't shoot pictures, I make them--I got one with him at the head of the thing and Dillinger's body lying on the slab.

TADEY: They used to do that just for publicity?

HAMM: Sure. Anything to get into the papers.

TADEY: They wouldn't do anything like that anymore, would they?

HAMM: No, they don't do that anymore, no. Things have changed, style and method of handling cases. Now there generally is a lawyer along who tells him what's kosher and what is not.

TADEY: Why did everybody want to get in? Was Dillinger that popular?

HAMM: It seemed like a great big bubble that seemed to burst. Well, I tell you what had happened. On the Wisconsin angle of it, when he shot it out with the FBI up in Wisconsin, the papers played it up. And at that time that's when it kind of broke. Well, at that time, we didn't have TV. We had radio publicity but not TV. And overnight people suddenly heard about it. He was just another guy in trouble. You know, he hit this

bank over there twice, just a short way from here on Route 6 in South Holland.

TADEY: How long was he actually in the news?

HAMM: I don't remember how long, but it blossomed into a front page story overnight. Of course, these people at that time, whenever anything happened around the morgue, and there would be a lot of newsphotographers around, then people would show up. This happened every day, wherever newspapermen gathered; why first thing you know, you have an audience. The word spreads, and they come like bees around the hive. they come from everywhere.

TADEY: Like you said, just another guy in trouble. Was there a lot of bank robberies in the '30's?

HAMM: Yes, he was a small-town Indiana boy who got into trouble. I don't think too serious trouble at the start, but once he got into trouble and got the local police, state police and the FBI after him, why, then he was in.

TADEY: Did you cover that escape that he made from the jail in South Holland?

HAMM: Yes, matter of fact, I may have made the last picture of him alive. I made a picture the night before he escaped from Crow Point. I got him handcuffed to the Indiana officials. He was handcuffed to the chair, sitting there. I got one here somewhere in all my junk, and it may have been the last picture when he was alive. Maybe somebody else made a picture later, but. . . you know the story is, of course, that he is supposed to

have whittled a gun out of wood; but, actually, I photographed the gun and it was whittled out of soap, a big bar of laundry soap. It was blackened with shoe polish and shined up and everything; and actually, if I was to hold it up and point it at you and tell you to put your hands up, you'd put them up. It looked that authentic. It looked like the real thing. He worked on it a long time, and what he did was to put the soap shavings down the toilet and flush the toilet and get rid of it that way. Of course, reporters got the story it was wood, and they all carried it. I'd like to know what became of that gun.

TADEY: That was actually authentic in the movie! They showed him making the gun out of soap.

HAMM: Did they show that, did they?

TADEY: He made it out of soap in the movie, and then it gets out of proportion. He escapes and takes two officials with him from the jail; one's the District Attorney and one's the Police Chief. No, one was the warden. They escape and he holds the hostages. Then he robs a bank with these guys as hostages. Then he takes them out in the country and lets them go and says, "OK, boys, here is your share of the take." He gives the warden half the money. The warden says, "Well, times are hard with the depression and everything," and he puts the money in his coat. [Laughter] As far as you know, did he take any hostages with him?

HAMM: I don't remember. You know, that is forty years or so ago.

TADEY: Did he free a prisoner, a colored guy?

HAMM: Yes, he took one of the colored fellows who helped him with the

locks; they jammed the locks some way. This colored guy jammed the locks so that he could get out; and he took him with him, I remember that.

TADEY: According to the movie, he joins the gang then.

HAMM: I don't think he did. I think they let him go his own way. He went another way. I think he went East somewhere and was caught later.

TADEY: In the movie, he is a member of the gang that gets killed later.

HAMM: Well, he didn't stay with him as far as I remember, because he turned up later in St. Paul. You know, there was a story in the paper, and I clipped it; the man who thinks he actually was the one who shot and killed Dillinger that night, just died. I clipped the story; I think he was down in Texas.

TADEY: Was it Pervis?

HAMM: No, Pervis didn't do it; this was another FBI man. Actually, this gun was supposed to be the one.

TADEY: Another thing about the movie, Pervis, himself is a psychopathical killer. In the movie, well in the movie, he kills Baby Face Nelson and Dillinger. He kills them all personally; and everytime he kills them, he lights up a cigar over their body. That's because it is part of his tradition, you know. [Laughter] Did you ever meet him, Pervis?

HAMM: Yes, oh yes!

TADEY: What was he really like?

HAMM: Well, he isn't anything like that, as far as I could see. He was

. . . most of those people at that time, they were serious fellows. They took their jobs serious. . . They did their work and they were not colorful. You would have a hard time picking them out in a crowd or picking them out individually, because they didn't have the color that the movie showed. I'm trying to think of another fellow who worked with Pervis. They worked together. I forget who the heck he was. I've been thinking of my pictures. I got them all back from the museum, but they jimmied them up on me, they mixed them all up. I got everything in a pile. Now I don't know where they are at.

TADEY: What about Baby Face Nelson?

HAMM: Baby Face Nelson?

TADEY: Where did they get him at, Barrington?

HAMM: No, let's see. No he was caught in St. Paul. Somewhere between here and St. Paul. I just don't remember. There was a number of characters around at that same time that were being hunted down. They were markmen, pretty good shots. They were after them. We had a fellow here in Chicago called Midget Fernikies. I think was his name. He was a little man, little fellow, and he was a wizzard at safe blowing, that sort of thing. We had another character, his name was Durkin, Marty Durkin, who was one of the best pistol shots ever known, and the FBI was chasing him down. They finally got him. You know, the most deadly guy of the set and the biggest cold-blooded killer was Burke, Killer Burke. There was a man who was really a bad actor, but he never was played up like Dillinger. I photographed him when they brought him

back to St. Joe's, Michigan to the jail there and locked him up. He tried to tear the jail apart when they got him in there. I got some pictures of him before they put him in; he had a black mustache. It took a half a dozen men to hold him.

TADEY: He wasn't a bankrobber was he?

HAMM: He was everything. He was a bankrobber, killer, and even fellows like Dillinger avoided him, but he got in on all the action some way or another.

TADEY: I don't know if it is true, they say he was reported to be one of the guys in the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, one of the shooters, according to some books, I know.

HAMM: Well, let's see. Yes he could have been one of those.

TADEY: They never did identify him?

HAMM: No. Well I think they weren't actually sure who the killers were.

TADEY: Do you remember a couple of guys by the name Albert Anselmia and John Scalise?

HAMM: Yes, they were two that Capone had differences with. They were with him, and they had differences with him. If I remember right, he had them knocked off.

TADEY: Did people turn out for the funerals like a Memorial Day Parade?

HAMM: Yes, yes.

TADEY: Were the streets lined?

HAMM: Yes, they came from all over. They come from New York; New York hoodlums would come, and we'd get work through the railroad, the publicity departments that so and so was on the 20th Century. And we'd be down at the depot to meet them. It would shock them, and they'd be so surprised that they'd jump back on the train and run through the train and try to duck off through another door or something. We'd try to photograph them and chase them all over the depot. Of course, in those days we used flash powder, and it was awfully hard to run after somebody and keep your flash powder together and get a picture. We photographed them, famous hoodlum out of New York City, and Philadelphia, and other places.

TADEY: Did they enjoy these funerals?

HAMM: Well, it seemed like a must to make an appearance, you know to keep an in with the powers that be. Politicians do the same thing, you know.

TADEY: A lot of times they'd have them killed themselves, and then come to mourn.

HAMM: Sure. They'd show up in the bold face "Look I don't know anything about it!" (laughter)

TADEY: Well, they wouldn't let you in to photograph. . .

HAMM: The body?

TADEY: Yes.

HAMM: No, sometimes we would try to arrange with the undertaker that he would get the publicity, be in the picture, but, he was afraid you know. What we used to do, though, several times I was assigned to case the joint. I'd go over and walk through with all the people viewing the body and keep my ears open, and pick up whatever I could hear, kind of stand around and pick up all the odds and ends so that we could get a tip on something. I went to several of them and went through as a mourner, you know, looking and standing around until I got hustled out. They generally saw you just standing too close, so they generally told you, "Get going, get going." (laughter) He's dead.

TADEY: Were these hoods, or hood with class? What's the difference between these guys, we'll say and the guys who run around the streets of Chicago, these gangs?

HAMM: Well, the difference now is, of course, nowadays, they don't throw their weight around like they did then. They were typical strong men hoods; you could pick them out and you could tell who they were, and they would throw their weight around. Nowadays, these fellows try to keep in the background. In other words, they don't want an arrest, because they don't want a record made. Those fellows didn't care.

TADEY: Like the Peace Stone Rangers. They think they are a lot like

these gangsters.

HAMM: No, there's no comparison. Those people are just like one step out of the woods. In fact, they're just like some African tribe. No they wouldn't last two minutes with those people, because the way those fellows operated, if they were to step in today they would break up those gangs so fast, there wouldn't be anything to it. They actually weren't cowards, those hoodlums. They were bold. I don't know if they had good sense, but they were tough, and these fellows today, the way these fellows operate, these fellows are just sneaks. They sneak around and try to scare people, and things they do, like shooting people. Jimmy Breslin wrote a story, a book called, "The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight," but don't think that these fellows couldn't shoot straight. (laughter) You know, you hate to think of this, you hate to think of Capone in that light, but actually the man was a gifted organizer just like these labor organizers. He had it; he knew how to organize; he knew how to run it and as young as he was, he could run a business. He could step in and run a business. His business, of course, was crime and corruption and everything that went with it, but he knew how to run it. He was a real businessman because he made, I don't know how many millions in the business. I knew at one time the number of millions that he took in. You don't do that unless you know what you are doing. He knew what he was doing. He worked out things and he was able to stay ahead of the law for a long time before they caught up with him. They were after him all the time. Capone was able to play his part.

TADEY: Was he a gentleman in public?

HAMM: Well, he was on public appearances. I got a picture of him with Gabby Hartnett and, let's see who else was in it, somebody else was in it, somebody else came over to shake hands with him.

TADEY: Hartnett got in trouble for that.

HAMM: Yes, and somebody else. He had his son with him.

TADEY: Did you take that picture?

HAMM: Yes. Well he appeared once in a while at different affairs like this, sports. He was just another guy, nobody paid too much attention to him. Matter of fact, McGurn was sitting right in back of him. Machine Gun McGurn with some fellows of his who were his body guards. You know, we used to have, our troubles back in those days. I'm trying to think of the guy they used to call 'Pineapples'. He used to make bombs and throw them. Well, as soon as we got word -- we worked down at police headquarters on State and 11th -- and when the flash would come in, we'd go right out there. In those days we worked from a tripod with flash powder. A saloon would be bombed or a speak-easy and we would get out there, and we'd set up in the middle of the street and get all set, and there wouldn't be a soul around. It would be quiet, about 4 o'clock in the morning. All of a sudden we would let go with a big flash gun and people actually shot at us. They would come running out of houses and everything thinking sure we were bombing them again. (laughter) We worked with flash powder, it was really tough. Did you ever see the guns we used to use, flash guns? I've got one here. (---)

TADEY: One of the other topics I wanted to touch on is the Leopold and Loeb case.

HAMM: Yes?

TADEY: I guess it wouldn't come under gangsters but it was a great crime story.

HAMM: It was another kind of a situation which developed where I got in first on it. Not that I was the best in the business, but for some reason I had a faculty for being there when. . . I was with a young picture chaser. He was a fledging reporter from the University of Chicago named Alvin Goldstein. He used to work part time for the Daily News. We called them picture chasers. They would go out and get pictures and bring them back. He and I were out on another story. We used to go to the police station in those days to use the police free phones. They let the newspapermen use the phone, and we would call the office on their phone and save a nickle. Also, we'd check and see what was doing. I went into the South Chicago police station and the desk sargeant let me use the phone. I called and then he said, "The wagon just went up. They found a boy's body out in the sticks, out in the boon-docks." He said, "I don't know what it is all about, but they found this body."

TADEY: That was around here somewhere wasn't it?

HAMM: No, well. . .

TADEY: Hegewisch

HAMM: Yes, it's over east of here. So Goldstein, who I said was just a young start, he got excited and wanted to go "Let's go, let's find out!" I said, "I don't want to drive out that far." The boy was supposed to have been found under a culvert in the water. I thought the kids were swimming and he probably drowned. He talked me into it, and we went out. We got there, and he identified the boy. He knew him. He went to the same synagogue that he did. He knew the parents. He also knew that the parents had received a ransom note. That's the way the story worked out. So he was telling us this, and I said, "Al, keep your mouth shut, and don't talk." So we made pictures of the boy's body on a hand cart with a little canvas over it. We went from there to his home in Hyde Park. I gathered up all the pictures I could get on the boy. I took everything that was in sight that the family had. We always took everything so the other paper couldn't get anything, whether they wanted it or needed it. So I took them back to my home and then called the office, and they had a man pick them up at my house. As the story developed Goldstein had gone to school with both of these fellows, with Loeb and Leopold. He knew their room in school. They had typed this ransom note on a typewriter that Goldstein had used for his University work. He remembered that there was a certain letter that -- I don't remember whether it was an "e" or what it was -- was rather obliterated. So he brought it up to the city editor. He said "You know, I wrote on a typewriter that had the same letter broken." And they looked at the ransom note, and sure enough. So they said, "Well, Al, go out there and see if you can borrow

the typewriter, so we can get the story." He went out there and they gave him some excuse that they had loaned the typewriter to somebody else. Of course, that started the ball rolling. As the story developed, Jim Malroy, who is a reporter and later got to be Governor Stevenson's secretary, was assigned with Goldstein to work on the story. I was always upset about it, in the sense that I worked on it from the start. They finally found the typewriter; it was thrown over the bridge at Jackson Park in the lagoon. The clothes were buried over on the beach on 79th street. I worked straight through on it, and then when it came time for the Pulitzer Awards, why Goldstein had to share with the fellow that was working with him on it. In later years Goldstein left the News and went with the St. Louis Post Dispatch. He is still with them today. He was in New York as a correspondent at the League of Nations for years and years. He may be retired now. I don't know. But he knew the families, both families. He had grown up and gone to school with them. The funny part of that story is that the next day after the body was found and they were tracing down things, I went back to the school where this kid was supposed to have been kidnapped from. I was making a picture of these kids in the play yard during recess, showing the kids playing, and it was quite a long shot. But there were two fellows, two young lads, that kept getting into the picture. They got me so mad that I went down and threatened them and told them to get out of the picture or else. They were rather cantankerous types, you know, at least Loeb was, not Leopold. I think that Loeb was kind of a sassy guy. He thought he was pretty good with

his fist and everything. I chased him out of the picture. The next day they were around there. I always felt sorry for Leopold. I felt that he was duped into this whole thing. He was a nice chap, quiet. He was the genius type. I always felt that he, the poor guy. . . Their families, both families were wonderful families. They had donated money to the Chicago charities for years. They were very honorable families in church circles and that sort of thing.

TADEY: What was the purpose of the murder?

HAMM: It was just one of those. . . this Loeb had a twisted mind. He had an idea that he could perform a perfect kidnapping. Well, the murder, I think it didn't start to be a murder. They tapped him with a machinest hammer, with the round end on it, and hit him on the head to quiet him, but they hit him in such a way that it killed him.

TADEY: Did they pour acid all over his face then?

HAMM: No! Different stories. . . Meyer Levin wrote that book called . . . Compulsion. He was also a picture chaser on the News and he wrote that Compulsion. He colored that thing up so, I'm telling you. I saw the body and there was none of that sort of thing. His privates weren't bothered. Meyer Levin wasn't even there. I don't know where he got all his stuff.

TADEY: Is this the fellow that put in the story about Loeb and Leopold being homosexuals?

HAMM: Yes, Levin wrote that. Although they did do something that was

quieted down. This Loeb was a wild type of person. He had somewhere or another hired a taxi cab. He and Leopold had the cab driver drive them way out in the boon docks somewhere, and then they took the guy out there and someway castrated him. I don't know that the purpose was or anything. Of course, this came up later. I don't know whether they paid off but the thing died out. (Loeb) was a problem. He was a real problem. As far as Leopold's concerned, a number of times in the penitentiary he offered up his life in experiments and things. I was in the penitentiary making pictures a couple of times, and I went through his classes where he was teaching. He recognized me; I could tell by his eyes when he looked at me that he remembered me, although he didn't speak.

TADEY: How did Clarence Darrow get into the case?

HAMM: Well, the families, of course, brought him in. He's like that F. Lee Bailey. Darrow was an exhibitionist and got a lot of publicity, and he was always getting himself on the front page. He wore a Windsor tie, a big saggy type coat and was a real exhibitionist who managed to get himself involved in cases like F. Lee Bailey does. So the family hired him and, of course, he did get them off the death penalty. The judge, his name has slipped my memory, has disappeared into the background. After that nobody ever seen or heard of him again.

TADEY: Were the newspapers calling for these kids to be hung?

HAMM: Well, the pressure was on. That's one place where they bugged

the state's attorney's office. Crow was state's attorney and Hildy Johnson was using his doctor's stethoscope. They had these boys in the state's attorney's office in separate rooms for questioning. And of course, the old trick was to tell each one, "Well, your partner told us this and your partner told us that," and they worked them up to where they made them believe that the partner confessed. Finally they got them where they both believed the other fellow had confessed. So then they confessed. That was the early days of bugging. (laughter)

TADEY: What was Darrow's defense, though? How did he try to defend these guys?

HAMM: Well, of course, he made them out as young boys that were trying to do a perfect crime. He colored it up pretty well.

TADEY: What type of voice did he have? Was he swaying. . .

HAMM: He was one of those types. . .I'm surprised that they haven't brought it to light on TV, something like Perry Mason. He was the Abe Lincoln type with the homespun type of suit, baggy pants, big Windsor tie, hair hanging down, slow moving and slow talking. He practically used hypnosis in the sense that he would practically hypnotize the jury. . .walk in front of them back and forth.

TADEY: Was this his style? Was he a knowledgeable lawyer? How did he win most of his cases? Did he have his offices here in Chicago?

HAMM: Yes, he had them in Chicago and he was a character.

TADEY: Did you cover him down in the Scope's monkey trial?

HAMM: Yes, I covered that, too.

TADEY: Could you give us a little history on that?

HAMM: Yes, he was on that with William Jennings Bryan.

TADEY: Were you down there at the trial?

HAMM: Yes. Outdoors out on the courthouse lawn and it seemed like it was 150° and no shade. It was hotter than blazes. Yes, I covered that. He was the type of character who would fit in well with those people, you see.

TADEY: What was going on when you got down there?

HAMM: It's a funny thing how many lawyers. He was kind of a hero to many young lawyers. As a matter of fact, my son-in-law is an attorney and went through law school and he had a kind of a feeling for Clarence Darrow, because he felt that he was kind of a master. Well, he was. There's no two ways about it. (laughter) He was also an exhibitionist who could handle a jury. Most of his cases were jury trials.

TADEY: How did he stack up against Jennings Bryan?

HAMM: Well, of course, Jennings Bryan was a completely different man than Darrow was. He was a little iron man. William Jennings Bryan, of course, was a polished sort of man, you know, and Darrow was a homespun type. Jennings Bryan died several days after that. He died from the

whole thing.

TADEY: Was he broken by the trial?

HAMM: I think he was, yes.

TADEY: You were there. Have you seen the movie, "Inherit the Wind?"

HAMM: No.

TADEY: Spencer Tracy portrays Clarence Darrow. Was it true that they got into a debate over the Bible?

HAMM: Yes, that was the whole story, you know. The whole story was about evolution. Of course, when you're busy making pictures you're not taking notes like a writer or a reporter, and you do miss some of it, but you try to keep up so that you know what you're doing--what to photograph. You do miss some of the parts of it, though.

TADEY: What type of voice did William Jennings Bryan have? They said he had sort of a high voice, that he didn't have a very good politician's voice.

HAMM: No, he didn't have the voice like Darrow. I can't say that his voice would impress you or convince you that he was right. Darrow had a smooth talking way, you know. They used to say he used to sweet-talk them into things.

TADEY: What was the attitude of the people? What town was that in Tennessee?

HAMM: A little country town. . .I've forgotten, but, anyhow, the town was a typical little Tennessee place where people were not up on all of these things. They never got involved or were outspoken or got up on their hind heels about it. They just took it.

TADEY: In the movie they portrayed people in this town as really bigoted. When Clarence Darrow came to town they didn't like him, because he was preaching against the Bible or he was supposed to be an atheist or an agnostic.

HAMM: Yes. They were a religious town, of course, and among themselves they may have discussed it, but they didn't in anyway show it. They were very religious and very homey people. They were not in favor of any bad publicity for the town and for its people, naturally, but they didn't in anyway raise their arms. As I say he used (Darrow) hypnotic powers on people because he'd run his fingers up and down through the suspenders then snap them sometimes.

TADEY: And that appealed to the people?

HAMM: Yes, it's one of those things that people were just mesmerized by.

TADEY: What did Jennings Bryan die of there? Was it a heart attack or stroke?

HAMM: It was a heart attack as far as I remember now. It was the heat. It was just really hot! They didn't get time to really rest.

TADY: I heard this trial was sort of a trend-setter then. It was covered on the radio. It was a live trial and WGN had it on.

HAMM: Well, I don't remember that it went over the radio, but it may have been. . .they didn't have tape that I remember. I've forgotten that now.

STERLING: You said you were on some worldwide assignments. What important events did you cover?

HAMM: Well, let's see. As I said before, I travelled with the presidential parties campaigning.

STERLING: Coolidge was the first one you went with?

HAMM: Oh no, I've gone with others. I've travelled with Roosevelt. My youngest brother, Clarence Hamm, was with Roosevelt most of the way--all the way through, he was with Associated Press.

STERLING: That was in 1912?

HAMM: No, later when Roosevelt was elected the first time.

STERLING: Oh, Franklin Roosevelt.

HAMM: Franklin Roosevelt, yes. As a matter of fact, my father, as I said, was a railroad engineer and we were both on Roosevelt's train--my brother Clarence and I--and we were in the car making pictures of him when we passed by the neighborhood where I used to live. I could see our home and I could see my mother like all the neighbor women out

watching the train. Women used to roll their apron up, you know, and I saw my mother standing out on the porch, and I said to Clarence, "There's Mom out there." I didn't know it at the time, but I found out a few seconds later that my father was the engineer on the train. Everytime the train moved I'd say to my brother Clarence, "He may be the President, but our dad is running this country right now, because his hand's on the throttle." Later, I don't know when it was, we got to see my dad, and we told him about it and he said, "I never had such a time in all my life. I never want to go through that again. I never had so many people telling me how to run an engine." He had Secret Service and railroad officials and all these people crowded up into the cab of the engine trying to tell him what to do and how to do it. And they had an advance engine that they used for security. They'd send an advance engine ahead in case there was anything wrong with the tracks. you know, and, of course, he had to keep his eye on that. He said, "I never want to do that again." I thought that was an unusually situation to be in. And in later years, I was with Alf Landon on his train when he was campaigning, and my brother was with Roosevelt and our trains passed each other in the early morning hours up around Detroit. We were going very slow in opposite directions and were hanging out of the doors. Finally we came to the car where my brother was hanging out and we shook hands, and he said, "Come on over with the winner!" (laughter) I said, "Phooey!" I taught my brother the business, and he went on to be quite a photographer. He and Joe Rosenthal covered the Pacific together. Joe was the man who made the Iwo Jima flag-raising picture. Clarence and Joe covered the Pacific up in Atu and Kiska and did all

those famous war pictures. I just wrote a letter to Joe the other day. He's still working for the San Francisco Chronicle, I think. My brother was picture editor in San Francisco. The AP pictures used to come in from the Pacific and he would handle them. One time Frank Noel won the Pulitzer Award on one of his pictures. He was a prisoner up in Korea for several years. He was an Associated Press photographer. He was captured and my brother was there when he was freed, when they brought him back and released him. Frank and Clarence were in the office when they were working on these pictures, and there was a picture that Frank had made that my brother liked so well he sent it through for transmission all over the world. It showed some natives in a boat begging. Clarence wrote the caption for it and sent it out. It said, "Water! Water!" They were begging for water and here they were surrounded by the ocean. So they went out and had supper and came back and the picture went out. Frank won the trophy for it. And what they were begging for was cigarettes (laughter), but that never got into the story. (laughter)

TADY: Did you ever cover any of the conventions?

HAMM: Yes.

TADY: Were you down in Miami in 1932 by any chance?

HAMM: Yes, I covered them ever since the twenties.

TADY: Were you there when they tried to assassinate Roosevelt?

HAMM: Yes, they tried to do that and Mayor Cermak was shot.

TADEY: Were you there when that happened? Can you give us a little background on that?

HAMM: I wasn't near when that happened. I just don't remember all the details on it. Cermak was a good friend of mine. I was closely associated with him when he was president of the Sanitary District-- got to know him well. My wife and I used to go to his home and visit. He had a place out in. . .I think it was Antioch, Illinois. We used to go out there to dinner. I knew him pretty well. Sonnenchine, his secretary, was a good friend of mine. I got to know him well. We were pretty close. I helped start the first police department photography set-up through Cermak. I got the idea. . .the police used to come to us for pictures for court cases of different things, and we would give them prints and we never got any money for it or anything, but we'd give them to them. One day I said to the mayor, "You know something, you should set up a photography lab and have each district have a police photographer to go out and photograph these things so you have your own pictures." He liked it so well he said, "Russ, would you take it over? I'll make you sargeant. You can run the school, teach them and start it." Well, I was excited and said yes, but I came home and told my wife and she said, "No, you're not going to do that." (laughter) So I had to go back and tell him no. But anyhow they started it and that's when the first school of photography started. Of course, the police started to do it, and they set them up and were using flash powder. Some of the policement had accidents and when they found out who started this thing, they were calling me

names for a while for coming up with the idea. Of course, it's got today to where it's very important in police work to have photographs in color and movies and everything. It's quite a department now.

Through infrared and all the different ways they can take, for example, if somebody chiseled your door open they can photograph it and magnify it and find out that that same chisel was used four blocks down the street on a door. Just as they can identify the rifling in a bullet through infrared, they can tell all those things. They can solve a lot of crimes that way.

STERLING: You were in the Chicago area during the Depression, weren't you?

HAMM: Yes.

STERLING: Were there any unique or peculiar things that you can relate about the Depression that you might have come upon in your work with the paper?

HAMM: Well, my thoughts go back, of course, to the early days of the Depression when the veterans were selling apples on the street corners. I also go back to the days when thousands and thousands of men came into the city with no money and no place to go, and they had soup kettles underneath Wacker Drive and under Michigan Avenue. They would sleep there at night and build big bonfires out of wood they collected. The men that were unemployed would come in there. It was pretty rough going. So many things happened.

STERLING: Were there many suicides?

HAMM: Yes, one thing that happened--we had a lot of suicides with people jumping out of high buildings. It wasn't safe for you to walk down the street in the Loop, because you never knew when somebody was going to leap. And of course, we always had a standing joke in our business. We had to photograph the buildings, and they'd always go up to the top floors of hotels and places, and we would kid and say they always took the darkest side of the building where you couldn't photograph it (laughter). the alley or somewhere. Yes, there were an awful lot of suicides; people who jumped out of buildings committed suicide because it was pretty rough.

TADY: Were people actually starving, though?

HAMM: Well, I can't say that I saw too much of people actually suffering starvation. They always managed to get food somewhere. There were all sorts of places where they handed out food. The Capone outfit handed out food down there at that restaurant. South Water Market would donate a lot of stuff, and when they got stuck with a lot of fruit and vegetables that were over ripe or something, they'd hand it out. Different outfits would hand out food and things--potatoes and that sort of thing. I can't remember actually seeing people like you see them in India and places where they're skin and bones lying in the gutters starving to death. People managed to get by and every family had to double up as far as people out of work. I know in my family, we had people out of work. We had to help out. I helped out as best I could. It wasn't anything like you see in Europe.

TADEY: Well, if you had a job would you be that bad off? What were the jobs paying?

HAMM: The salary scales were never as high as they are now. Back a few years the salary scales were pretty low. Even the labor unions, brick layers and carpenters, they didn't get the scales anywhere near what they're getting now.

TADEY: But if you had a job, generally, you could make out?

HAMM: Oh yes, a man got by. You didn't go in for any frills. People bought automobiles and managed to get by with an automobile, but they were cheaper cars. I had a Ford, a Flivver. It seemed to me like I was always paying on it (laughter), never got it paid up. Now that I think of it, it (Depression) went by in a hurry, thank goodness. I guess we suffered in a way. I took a fancy to some canned things--different types of canned food. One of the fellows I worked with was Norwegian or Scandinavian, and one day he came down and he said, "Did you ever eat Goffel Bitas?" And I didn't know what he was talking about. I said, "No, I don't even know what you're talking about." So he said, "Here, try these." And he had this can. It looked like a can of sardines, and I brought it home. Goffel Bita is something like a sardine, and they're in oil. So I decided one day to buy some and brought it home. I was in a store where they sold these fancy things, and I had a few bucks in my pocket so we had them on the shelf. When my daughter came over she had to see them. It was during the Depression. She said, "Well, we're the best fed family

in the city. We've got whatever these are, Goffel Bitas." (laughter)
She thought it was kind of a joke. I'm trying to think of some of those things that happened during that era.

TADY: What would the people do for recreation?

HAMM: Well, of course, they had the movies, and that was about it. Nobody was buying TV sets. Things slowed down to a halt. There wasn't much action anywhere. The race tracks operated.

TADY: Was Riverview around then?

HAMM: Yes, Riverview operated. White City was gone then. White City used to be at Sixty-Third and South Park. I think that was gone then.

TADY: Was that a recreation park?

HAMM: Yes, it was like Riverview. We used to pull stunts. I covered sports a lot. I was covering White Sox Park one day, and Art Shires was playing first base for the Sox. He was quite a showman and an exhibitionist. He chewed a big cud of tobacco. He always managed to get himself into the news somehow or another. He got into fights and that sort of thing. So I got the idea. . . George Trafton, the football player, was seated over at the side. George was pretty much the same type. So the thing jelled in my mind that I might get some sort of a deal to get some pictures. So I went over to Shires and told him that Trafton was here, "and he said he could take you any day of the week on one round." Well, he was spitting tobacco

juice and waving his arms and said, "He did? Well you tell him _____, you set it up, and I'll be there." So I went and told Trafton the same thing (laughter) that Art Shires said he could take him in one round. He reacted the same way so the story got up in the press coop and they started to write about it. The first thing you know, they set up a fight between Trafton and Shires. They set it up in White City in the ballroom there. They had the ring set up and were going to fight for a certain amount of money. The night that they were going to fight that place was packed. They had a couple of preliminary fights and finally they brought these two fellows in. I was up in the organ loft making pictures from up there, and we were shooting so many flash lights that you couldn't even see for the smoke. Anyhow, the fight started. These two fellows squared off and walked around and swung their arms and went through all the motions and the first round was over, then the second round. Finally after about the second or third round, they were getting arm weary. They couldn't even raise their arms up. They'd walk over to the ropes, put their heads over and talk to their friends down in the front row (laughter). It got to be one of the laughing stocks of the fight game. I forget now how it turned out. It was one of those deals we used to pull in the newspaper business. We were always framing up the ideas and things. (---) One of the, I forget what outfit it was, was going to get some money for one of the organizations. They planned one kind of a deal at the Michigan Avenue bridge at the site of Fort Dearborn.

So the press agent for this, wanted to get advance publicity. So they made a deal to get some Indians and have them on the actual site of Fort Dearborn, which is on the southeast corner of the bridge. It's marked off there. He made the mistake of giving them money the day before to get there. So we all got there, all the newspapers and newsreels were all there and the press agents were there, and we were waiting around and waiting around and no Indians. They didn't show up. And this poor press agent---we kidded him. We said, "Maybe they're coming up the river. Go and look." So he was looking down the river and they didn't show up. Finally the papers folded up and left. I wanted to get one picture--we always got a bonus if we got the Tribune Tower in the background, and I had one all framed that I wanted to get. I waited, and after they were all gone I went across the bridge and then came back. The press agent went with me and I said, "Come on back. I got an idea." So we went back and I said, "Scrape up some wood and we'll start a little fire and you send up smoke signals to the Indians. You send up these smoke signals with your blanket, and I'll photograph it and get the Tribune Tower in the back." He went for that idea--anything to get some publicity. So we went back, and he started the fire. He had the blanket and was sending up the smoke signals, and I was photographing it when a big red-faced Irish policeman come along. "What the hell are you doing here!" he said. (laughter) "Sending smoke signals for my Indians." He wanted to smell his breath and everything else, and I backed off. I thought, "I'll let these two fellows settle it themselves." So finally this policeman, he was mad, so he put in a call for his

sargeant, and the sargeant came over from the park district. He wanted to know what was going on. "This fellow's got this fire and sending up smoke signals to his Indians." (laughter) The sargeant said, "Get that fire out of here and lock this fellow up." They had to kick the fire out and spread the thing around to get it out. So they took him into the station, and I went back to the paper and gave the story and made the pictures. Tom Powers was doing the rewrite, and I gave Tom the story. It was such a good story it went on the front page, and then it went over the wire service (laughter) and AP used it, and it went all over. This fellow got more publicity than he would have had if the Indians had showed up. Of course, the other papers got sore, because their men walked off--didn't make it. A couple of them almost got fired. (laughter) I've seen this fellow a couple of times since that and shook hands, and he said, "You really saved my life. We had more publicity than we know what to do with." (laughter) I have the clippings on the story. Tom did a good rewrite on it.

TADY: I would like to ask you just a few things. You say you covered the sport scene?

HAMM: I worked sports for a few years, yes.

TADY: Were you there at Wrigley Field when Babe Ruth was in the 1932 series?

HAMM: Yes. Yes.

TADEY: Did he point at center field, when he hit his famous home run?

HAMM: No, that was played up. He was motioning out to a pitcher or something and actually wasn't pointing to the fence. I had a run in with Babe Ruth. I was sent up to do a strip on him. He was in a slump, and they said, "Get some pictures of him and find out what's wrong." So I went, and he came out to do batting practice before the game started. I went out to him and said, "Babe, I've got to do some pictures of you" and he called me some dirty so-and-so "Get away from me!" he said. "Don't bother me." He swore at me, and it made me mad. I said, "Listen, don't you use that on me. I'll rap this camera right around your neck." The camera weighed six pounds. I said, "I'll hit you right over the head with it," I said, "Your Babe Ruth and all that, but you're not going to pull that on me." Well, he backed me up to where I was right by a gate that went into the stands. I backed into this gate, unknowingly, and was in the stands, and then the thought came that the day before he had gotten into a hassle with a fan and was fined five hundred dollars for threatening the fan. So I remembered that, and the fans remembered that, so they started to take up my part. And they were urging him, "Go ahead belt him." He was standing there fuming and sweating. He was always a nasty guy anyhow. Babe Ruth has always gotten publicity for being a big-hearted soul, but he would never do anybody a favor. The argument stopped and he went over to bat. I forgot all about it for a few minutes. I went right out on the field and started to

make pictures. Before I knew it, I was face to face with Ruth again after he finished taking his batting practice. He was right there in front of me. He looked at me and I looked at him, and I still had the camera. I thought, "Well, this is where I am going to let him have it." He said, "What did you want?" I said, "I just want to make a picture or two of you, and that's all there is to it." He said, "Well, take it, damn it, and get it over with." So then he stood that close. (laughter) I had a run-in one time with the manager of the Cubs, Leo Durocher. He was coming out of the dugout, and kids were hanging over the side there asking for autographs. They were waving their programs. He brushed the kids off and called them filthy names and walked along. That made me mad, and I grabbed him by the arm and said, "Listen don't you ever call those children that name again." I had the camera and said, "I'll rap this. . ." I guess I made a practice of rapping it around people necks. (laughter) "I'll rap this around your neck if you ever do that again." "They're pests," he said. I said, "Those are the pests that support you, and those children are going to be disillusioned from the fact that you would call them such a name as that." I said, "That's a terrible thing to say to children." "I haven't got time for them." "Well then you ought to get out of the business." Well, of course, he has been that type of a person.

STERLING: That happened when he was a player?

HAMM: He was the manager.

STERLING: He was the manager!

HAMM: Yes.

TADEY: Was that recently then?

HAMM: Not too long ago. It was with the Cubs. Oh he would get doubled up and swear! The language he would use was awful. These children would stand there and just were afraid he might stiike them down. But he brushed it off and just went on about his business. I never liked him after that. I just had no use for him. I wouldn't ask him for a picture. I wouldn't take a picture for a five hundred dollar bonus.

TADEY: Did you ever meet Lou Gehrig then?

HAMM: Yes, Gehrig. Gabby Hartnett married a girl from the north side. I stood up in Gabby Hartnett's wedding the day he was married. One of the finest of all the people in sports. Of course, Dempsy was my favorite, but the most famous of the women, who was champion of all and everything, was Babe Dietrichson. She was married to the wrestler. Babe Dietrichson was the champion of everything, golf, baseball, anything. She was wonderful. She always had time for you. And Mickey Mantle. Yes, Mantle. He was always a nice fellow. I can't say the same for Roger Maris. He went haywire after he got up to the top. But Mickey Mantel was always nice; he always had time. The champion of them all, still is as far as I'm concerned, is Joe, Big Joe Dimaggio. There was a gentle man. What a wonderful man! Joe Dimaggio always was a fine fellow. He was so good with children.

Children would flock around him, and he would stand for one hour after the game was over signing all the autographs. The others would all be gone, and he would still be there. He was liked by all, by all.

TADEY: They didn't have sports reporters persay, then.

HAMM: Yes they did.

TADEY: How would you get from crime to sports then?

HAMM: Well, see you had to be more then just the average photographer. You had to be able to handle all the different departments. You'd go from news, editorial, to sports, to women's page, to the business office. I think, Red Grange was a sweet guy in football. One of the nicest fellows, always a gentleman. I always liked Red. There were several other football players that I liked.

TADEY: Did you know Hack Wilson?

HAMM: Yes. (laughter) I wasn't a drinker, I didn't drink beer or anything, but I went with Hack and others to all different speakeasy places where Hack loved beer. Oh, he would drink beer until it was coming out of his ears. I was with him many times when they had to prop him up to get him into the car and get him back to the hotel. The next day he would be out at the ballpark, and he'd win.

TADEY: Some players can do that.

HAMM: Yes. Hack was one of the nicest guys. He was. All of them used to know all the places and he would take them to all of them. Mayor Cermak would go out to his Bohemien Brewery out there, out

west in back of the bridewell out there. Yes, Hack would have been the greatest home run hitter of all times, if he hadn't gone like he did. I noticed that this fellow now is beginning to get a little hard to live with, the colored man, Hank Aaron. He's getting a little tough to live with. It goes to their head.

TADY: Did you meet John McGraw?

HAMM: Yes. The greatest one of all, the grand old man of baseball and a real gentleman was Connie Mack. He was a gentleman. He dressed in a blue serge suit. He looked like he had just come from church Sunday morning with a high starched collar, very high. He, always sat with his hands on his knees like this. He ran his ball club that way. He didn't chew tobacco, and he never used a cuss word, and he didn't storm out like Leo Durocher and threaten to tear anybody's head off. He just sat like this, and he ran his ball club that way. Of course, they were not the best, they were not on top, but they were respected and liked.

TADY: You won thirty-six national awards?

HAMM: Yes, thirty-six.

TADY: What were some of those for?

HAMM: Different sports, different assignments.

TADY: Which do you consider your best picture?

HAMM: Well, I always say "My next picture will be my best."

(laughter) Always. . .I tried to better myself with each one. Because, as I say, there is no such thing as a perfectionist. By the time you think you are perfect, you fall on your face. But you have to try and perfect the last one. Just one time you think you have a perfect one, you hold it up and everybody looks at it, and they will show you the mistakes.

STERLING: Do you have a favorite one that you have taken?

HAMM: Well, you would be surprised that it is after all the thousands and thousands that I made. It's just a picture of my two little grandchildren. I'll show it to you. I covered different types of assignments. I covered very famous assignments front page news and everything. I went from New York out to Winter Set, Iowa to cover the birthday of an apple tree. I was sent out on the train. Stark Delicious Apple Tree Company gave this big party in Winter Set, Iowa, on the 100th anniversary of their 1st apple tree. As I understand it, to grow apples you don't plant apples from apple seeds, you plant them from cuttings from the tree. This old tree--they had over a hundred thousand cuttings from this tree. So they gave this big splash. They had bands, parades, music and food. I went out and covered it. I covered it all, and your imagination can run away with you. When I finished up, I had one more picture I wanted to make. I went back to get the old tree with nobody around it. My imagination carried me, and I thought I saw the old tree smiling.

(laughter) That's carrying it a little bit far, isn't it? But that's true. My one favorite award, I won the Photographer of the Year--I

always remember things that happened. We were in Wisconsin at a convention and Frank Lloyd Wright was the speaker. He was up on a platform, and I was in the front row near the steps that went up to the platform. He made the speech and when he got through he came down the stage steps. I was afraid he might fall, so I went up to help him. I took him by the elbow, and as he came down he mumbled, "Who the hell designed this building?" Before I could think I said, "A fellow named Frank Lloyd Wright." (laughter) But I won the AP, and United Press, Encyclopedia Britannica, and all those different awards, the Red Cross. . .

STERLING: Were any of those for historical pictures?

HAMM: Of course, I won the National Press Photographer's award. Which is the highest award, the Oscar. You get a diamond ring with it and you get a plaque. Of course, out of a three thousand membership I felt highly honored that I was selected. It made me feel good. I won cups, silver cups, loving cups. My daughter has practically all of them.

TADEY: Is that solid gold?

HAMM: Yes, and it's heavy.

TADEY: Yes, it is heavy.

HAMM: Yes, it is very heavy. (laughter) That is considered to be the Oscar of the Association's Award.

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